ONE VISION, MULTIPLE PATHWAYS

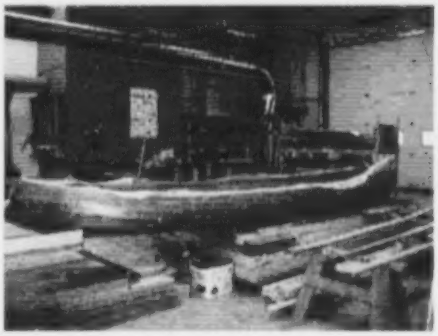
Secondary School Programming Process
Final Report

Prepared For:
Department of Education

Yukon

Prepared By:
proactive
INFORMATION SERVICES INC.

October 2008



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to take this opportunity to thank numerous people for the assistance they provided as we undertook the Secondary School Programming Process.

First, we would like to thank the Secondary School Programming Advisory Committee for their commitment, advice, and support. The Committee has Departmental membership from the Public Schools, Advanced Education and First Nation Programs and Partnerships Branches, principals from the three secondary schools (and their designates), the school council chairs from those schools, representatives from Yukon Chiefs Committee on Education, CYFN and the Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee, a First Nations Elder, a representative from the Catholic Education Association of Yukon, and a representative from the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. We appreciated their critical reflection, insights, humour, and continued focus on the best interests of students.

While they are also members of the Advisory Committee, a special thanks is extended to the administrators of the three secondary schools involved in the process: Darren Hayes and Christine Klaassen-St. Pierre (F. H. Collins Secondary School), Kerry Huff (Porter Creek Secondary School), and Trevor Ratcliff and Ryan Sikkes (Vanier Catholic Secondary School). They supported the process by organizing our school visits and the student focus groups, as well as by overseeing the administration of staff and student surveys.

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Linda E. Lee, Larry K. Bremner, Denise Belanger
Proactive Information Services Inc.
October 2008

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Between January and October 2008 a number of people participated on the Advisory Committee. Some people attended many meetings; others attended one or two meetings. We thank them all for their contributions.

Advisory Committee Member	Position
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Kim Dolhan, Secretariat Support Mona Syed, Executive Assistant	Department of Education Public Schools Branch
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Denise Horwood or Mary-Jane Oliver or Olga Terry or Sandra Henderson or Ken Quong	F.H. Collins School Council
Robert Walker	Porter Creek School Council
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Linda E. Lee, Larry K. Bremner and Denise Belanger	Proactive Information Services Inc.

GLOSSARY

Brain-based Learning	Brain-based learning refers to instructional and assessment strategies that are based on recent research and new understandings of adolescent brain development.
Community Education Liaison Coordinator	CELCs, also known as Education Support Workers (ESWs), are employed by a First Nation. Situated in schools, they work with First Nations students to support school success. They act as a liaison and support to students coming from communities to Whitehorse, providing a bridge between First Nations communities and larger schools and community of Whitehorse.
Educational Stewardship	Everyone has responsibility for education. Each individual has a role and responsibility for his/her own education and for the education of others. Everyone is valued for the contribution they make towards education. Communities take responsibility for education of their children.
Experiential Learning	Experiential Learning is participative, taking place in purposefully constructed settings, whereby learners engage in structured experiences, combined with meaningful reflection, as a way to maximize learning. These structured experiences might include classroom "solution-finding" activities, outdoor activities, the performing arts, and Service Learning. Experiential Learning is suited to the acquisition of practical skills through the opportunity to practise techniques related to authentic tasks, undertaken in real-life settings. Wood Street programs are examples of experiential learning opportunities, but each secondary school also offers other experiential programming on-site.
Inclusion	Inclusion is "the value system which holds that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education. The practice of inclusion transcends the idea of physical location, and incorporates basic values that promote participation, friendship and interaction," (Yukon Department of Education, *Special Programs Service: A Handbook of Procedures and Guidelines*, 1995).

Individual Education Plan (IEP)	An IEP describes educational measures that are being taken to meet the needs of the student. Some students need minor adaptations and minimum support. Others have more complex needs which may require detailed planning that covers educational programming, social skills, technology and health care. An IEP, requiring informed consent of parents, outlines the strengths and needs of the student, long and short term goals, recommendations for addressing student learning needs, and those responsible for implementing the plan.
Language Nest	A language nest describes a collection of language programs within a school which provides a focus for students learning language(s) in addition to their primary or home language.
Year Round Schooling	Year round schooling is but one example of an alternative schedule. 'Year round schooling' or 'year round education,' is, in fact, a misnomer. Students in 'modified calendar' schools generally receive between 180 and 220 instructional days per school year, similar to the number received by their peers following a 'traditional' calendar. However, the distinguishing factor of a modified calendar model is a reorganized calendar that more evenly distributes instructional and vacation periods throughout the year.

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[2] The Appendices are bound as a separate document. The staff survey was only done as a web-survey, so a paper copy of the questionnaire does not exist. The questions can be seen in the print-out of the survey data.

[3] Proactive Information Services Inc. was established in 1984 specifically to provide research and evaluation services to clients in the public and non-profit sectors. Proactive's clients include ministries of education, school divisions/districts, schools, foundations, and other NGOs in Canada, Europe, and South America. For more information on Proactive, visit www.proactive.mb.ca.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

The process of examining secondary programming in Whitehorse arises as a follow-up to a School Facilities Study completed in June 2007 and has direct implications for the future of F.H. Collins Secondary School. However, the work represents the initial step in a larger process of creating a secondary education system responsive to the needs and changing realities of secondary students in Yukon. Proactive Information Services Inc. was contracted by the Yukon Department of Education to undertake the project.

The project was guided by a Secondary School Programming Advisory Committee with broad governmental and stakeholder representation.[4] The role of the Advisory Committee was outlined as follows:

- to provide advice regarding process,
- to identify stakeholders to be included in the data collection process,
- to provide advice regarding appropriate methods for obtaining input within their context,
- to review the draft report to ensure clarity and comprehensiveness.

Proactive was contracted in December 2007, with the first meeting of the Advisory Committee held early in January 2008. Data collection occurred over a five month period, February to June 2008. The process concluded with the presentation of the final report in October 2008.

This comprehensive examination of secondary programming articulates a vision for secondary programming with the best interests of learners at its core. The process has incorporated extensive consultation and data collection,[5] while grounded in a review of the literature on effective and promising educational practices. Existing educational data have been analyzed and an inventory of existing programming has been created; all of which provide information upon which this report is based.

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[4] The Committee has departmental membership from Public Schools, Advanced Education and First Nation Programs and Partnerships Branches, principals from the three high schools and school council chairs from those schools and representatives from Yukon Chiefs Committee on Education, CYFN and the Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee, a First Nations Elder, the Catholic Education Association of Yukon, the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, the Yukon Teachers' Association, and Yukon College.

[5] A thorough discussion of the methodology is found in Chapter 3 of the full report.

B. PURPOSE

The Secondary School Programming Process began with the notion that the strengths of existing programming must be respected and maintained while, at the same time, areas for change must be identified. Recommendations should take into account the system's capacity to respond, while considering the effective use of existing resources. Programming must address the strengths and needs of **all** students.

Specifically, the Secondary Programming Process was designed to:

- articulate a vision for secondary programming in Whitehorse,
- identify issues that will impact the future of secondary programming in Whitehorse,
- identify areas for programming improvement and systemic change, building on the strengths of the current system, and
- identify facility requirements, as they relate to the delivery of secondary programming in Whitehorse, particularly in relation to the future of F.H. Collins Secondary School.

Schools Created from the Ground Up on the Basis of Student Success

"... never permit a school to be built without first doing the research on what exactly a school has to be in order to guarantee positive student outcomes. He may discover, for example, that a whole new curriculum is needed. He may realize that without strong parental involvement, the school would have no chance to succeed. He may discover that the research tells us how each student learns differently and how technology could be leveraged to offer personalized learning opportunities. If they don't 'get it,' he may recommend that different people be hired to design the curriculum or run the school than those you have designated. Most importantly, he may realize that one definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."

- Prakash Nair, *But Are They Learning? School Buildings – The Important Unasked Questions*, 2002.

Ultimately, supporting student learning and engagement must be at the heart of any educational improvement initiative. Therefore, a fundamental purpose for such an initiative is to support the success of students, preferably within the context of their family and community. It is important for schools to identify and build on learners' strengths using a holistic approach, based on educationally and culturally relevant activities within a supportive learning environment. (See adjacent text box.)

The Secondary School Programming Process provides a unique opportunity for Yukon to move beyond studying secondary education programming and facilities, to creating secondary education opportunities that engage and inspire - not only students, but also their families, their teachers, and the other adults in their lives and communities.

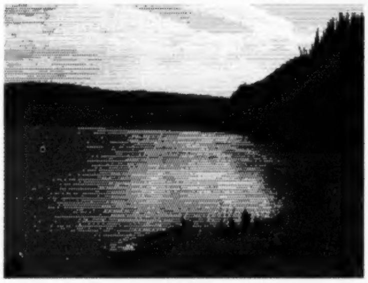
C. GUIDING ASSUMPTIONS AND PRINCIPLES

Guiding assumptions and principles were developed collaboratively with the Advisory Committee early in the process. It was agreed that the Secondary School Programming Process will be based on the **assumptions** that:

1. Everyone has responsibility for education. Each individual has a role and responsibility for his/her own education and for the education of others. Everyone in the community is valued for the contribution s/he makes towards education ("educational stewardship").
2. Providing the best education possible for young people should drive programming.
3. Programming should build on the strengths of all learners and should take place in a supportive learning environment, responsive to the needs and changing realities of secondary students in Yukon and their communities.
4. The strengths of existing programming will be valued while, at the same time, identifying areas for growth based on what is known of effective (validated) educational practice and what appear to be promising innovations.
5. Recommendations need to be realistic in terms of the system's capacity to respond and must ensure effective use of resources.

The **process** itself will:

1. be characterized by collaboration and respect,
2. be open and inclusive, providing opportunities for the voices of all constituent groups to be heard,
3. respect and value the diversity of cultures, languages, and communities in Yukon, leading to an understanding of "who we are" individually and collectively,
4. provide a space for reflection and action, helping bridge the gap between educational policy and practice, thus supporting innovation and growth.



CHAPTER 2: SUMMARY

A. VISION

The vision for secondary education in Yukon includes the following elements, as identified by the Advisory Committee.

- Focus on students,
- Student achievement and success to participate in post secondary and in the work force,
- Preparation to be global citizens (school, community, Canada, the world),
- Acknowledge and value cultural, linguistic, and spiritual diversity,
- Inclusive programming that addresses the needs and talents of all learners,
- Maintain high expectations for all learners,
- Increase the focus on experiential and vocational programming,
- The physical place should foster the development of a warm, caring, welcoming school environment that creates a sense of belonging.

> "We firmly believe that schools need to grow from a shared vision . . . much of that can be lost in the translation of a written vision into built form."
> - Nair and Fielding, 2005.

Similarly, in existing documents, statements include the desire for excellence, the need for student pride and self-worth, the concept of life-long learning, and the importance of connecting to the larger society, linking the personal and social contexts. These contexts include cultural, spiritual, and linguistic dimensions.

Therefore, the **vision** for secondary education can be summarized as:

Every student is a cherished member of an inclusive school community where students' individual characteristics and strengths are recognized and valued. A flexible, healthy and caring school environment, characterized by high expectations for all, supports the growth and development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that will serve young people well in their future lives as contributing local and global citizens.

B. KEY FINDINGS AND EMERGING THEMES

Through the review of existing data and documentation, coupled with the process of primary data collection (interviews, focus groups, surveys, consultation), six key themes emerge. An extensive literature review on validated (proven) and promising practices in the realm of secondary education informs the themes.

1. Recognizing Strengths and Assets

Yukon education in general, and secondary education in Whitehorse in particular, exist in a context rich with opportunity. Yukon's educational philosophy has, for more than a decade, supported inclusion as an overarching philosophy, guiding the education of **all** students and contingent upon social policies defining education not as a privilege, but as a human right provided regardless of race, ethnicity, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, gender, age, or mental or physical disability ability.[6] Yukon has the opportunity to realize this vision for its secondary students.

> "The value system which holds that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education. The practice of inclusion transcends the idea of physical location, and incorporates basic values that promote participation, friendship and interaction."
>
> - Yukon Department of Education, *Special Programs Service: A Handbook of Procedures and Guidelines*, 1995.

Whitehorse has a small but diverse secondary student population, attending four secondary schools. Whitehorse secondary students, school staff, parents, and community agree that the size of these secondary schools[7] is "about right." No one supports the concept of one large secondary school ("super school") serving all secondary students in Whitehorse. In existing literature on school size, secondary schools of 500 to 600 students (not dissimilar to the current secondary enrollments in Whitehorse) are viewed as appropriate: "Small school cultures promote social equity, narrower academic achievement gaps between socio-economically disadvantaged and affluent student, reduction in student drop-out rates and higher attendance levels, safer schools, student emotional stability and character development, and increased student, parent and community satisfaction."[8]

The land and environment in Yukon are potentially educational assets. Traditional Indigenous connection to the land, as well as current sensitivity to environmental issues, set the stage for using the outdoors, even more extensively, in any expansion of experiential programming.

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[6] This is guaranteed under Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

[7] These findings do not include École Émilie Tremblay as the school community was not included in primary data collection activities with the exception of a school site visit, as they chose not to participate.

[8] Schmidt, M., Murray, C, and Nguhen, H. (2007). Cohesive Communities, Improved Schools: A Case for Small Schools. *Education Canada,* 47(4), p. 59.

In addition, Yukon is the "most connected" education system in Canada, with internet access across the territory, computer labs in schools, and video-conferencing widely available. The territory is also rich in human resources outside the education system itself, with business, labour, and community agencies, and First Nations willing to partner with education. Many programs for adolescents already offer positive experiences for young people outside the education system, but with some connections to schools (for example, Sundog). Interviews in Whitehorse and other communities not only brought forth the willingness to partner with education, but also openness to innovation - to "doing things differently" - in support of youth.

Within government, apprenticeship is a priority, providing another opportunity for growth of educational and training opportunities for students, in addition to the many that already exist. Examples of existing programs and approaches that the educational literature supports as effective practice include, among others:

- The experiential programs that exist in all Whitehorse schools, as well as at Wood Street,
- French Immersion, as well as other language programming,
- Francophone school to support language and cultural identity,
- Catholic secondary school to support faith-based education and living,
- Programs shared among schools (e.g., Wood Street),
- Supportive alternative settings, such as the Individual Learning Centre and the Teen Parent Centre,
- Learning Assistance available to students in F.H. Collins, Porter Creek and Vanier Catholic Secondary Schools,
- Tutoring available to students in all secondary schools,
- Community Education Liaison Coordinators (CELCs)/Education Support Workers (ESWs) in schools,
- Multiple other examples (school within a school, First Nations Arts and Culture for all students, Culture Week, Challenge Day, volunteer/community service, Positive Alternative to Suspension).

Many people are able to point to examples of education that already "work" for students in Yukon, as well as things that need to change. The Secondary School Programming Process recognizes and wishes to build on the strengths of the current education system and rich community assets available in Yukon, while finding ways to enhance the secondary experience for every student.

2. Individualizing for Student Success

> *"Every day brings a different feeling. When the geese fly over you feel homesick; when the snow comes, when the caribou come, you want to be home."*
>
> - Former Student, Old Crow

While many programs exist to support student success there remains an imperative to serve certain students better. Graduation rates for First Nations students are significantly lower, scores on the Grade 9 Yukon Achievement Tests are lower for First Nations students, and a larger proportion of First Nations students are on Individual Education Plans. Students entering secondary school in Whitehorse from communities not having their own secondary options, often lack the same level of skills as students from Whitehorse. Many struggle with the transition to secondary school, despite various support mechanisms. People in the communities, as well as educators and students, highlight these issues when interviewed. Students in one of the focus groups, as well as people at the public consultation supported a "school within a school" concept for Grade 8 or Grade 8 and 9 students to help ease the transition. The educational literature emphasizes the need to provide multiple supports for transition both before and after students move into secondary school.

The WELS program[9] is an example of a program that was intended to support students who are functioning significantly below what is required for success in the regular program. Numerous people, including current and former students, raised concerns about the criteria for placement of students in this program, as well as the program's efficacy. (There is a belief that if students come from certain communities they are automatically placed in WELS.) Furthermore, in WELS, students receive a School Leaving Certificate after participating in this program and there is a seeming lack of understanding regarding the implications of this certificate; it is not a Yukon Graduation Certificate. Students often need to take years of upgrading (for example, in Developmental Studies at Yukon College) before being able to access post-secondary programs.

> *"I have been at this school for five years . . . I can hardly wait to leave . . . [then] I'm going to college next year.*
>
> - WELS student

The educational literature strongly supports the need to assess, plan, and program for students as individuals. "It means recognizing and accepting that each student is a unique individual. . . . using what you know about learning and about each student to improve your teaching so that students all work in ways that have an optimal effect on their learning."[10] The literature applies the same logic to assessment which must be developmentally, culturally, age appropriate, and tailored to the strengths and experiences of each learner. Students need to be actively engaged in both their own learning and in assessing their own learning.

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[9] WELS is known as Essential Skills Development (Essentials) at Porter Creek Secondary School.

[10] Earl, Lorna M. (2003). *Assessment As Learning: Using Classroom Assessment to Maximize Student Learning.* Corwin Press, Inc.: Thousand Oaks, CA. p. 87.

"We ignore at our peril the importance of relationships in education . . . . The kids most left behind in our schools . . . need those relationships most of all. They need to feel their teachers believe in them and will buoy them up if they start to sink. "
- Meir, 2005.

Both the educational literature and students agree about the importance of a safe, caring environment where teachers know students as individuals. The importance of relationships cannot be underestimated, nor can the necessity of holding high expectations for student success. While students in the focus groups highlight their good teachers, the student survey data show that high risk students and those from communities outside Whitehorse are less positive about their secondary school experience. Students from outside Whitehorse are less likely than their peers to see staff as caring and respecting differences. All these point to the need to find ways to understand and support the success of individual adolescent learners.

3. Creating Multiple Pathways

A strong theme throughout the primary data collection, supported by the educational literature, is the need to ensure that programming is appropriate for students. First Nations cultures, history, and languages need to be more strongly embedded in secondary schools. Students need to see themselves and their communities in the curriculum of the high school: "Culture and language will remain superficial and disconnected if it is not based on a complete understanding of how Indigenous knowledge is deeply rooted in people's lives and consciousness. It is essential, as well, to take into account the diversity of indigenous cultures and experiences."[11] Living culture and language is evident in Yukon in École Émilie Tremblay, while Vanier Catholic Secondary School provides an example of faith and spirituality's connection to young people's lives and education. Promising practices in First Nations education promote learning as a holistic, experiential process, connected to community, people and nature: "[Education] is a value-laden process using experience, storytelling, ritual and ceremony, dreaming, tutoring, and artistic creation. At its heart, indigenous education is a spiritual endeavour."[12] In addition, examples exist of curricula that integrate traditional Indigenous values, teaching principles and concepts of nature with those of Western science.

"Recent studies also indicate that the brain seems to exhibit plasticity . . . [with its] demonstration through 'experiential learning.' This means that the brain has the ability to change as a result of rich experience though active, personal and engaging learning activities."
- Madrazo and Motz, 2005.

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[11] Wotherspoon, T. & Schissel, B. (1998). *Decolonization and Voice: Prospects for Aboriginal Education in Canada*, Discussion Paper, Pan-Canadian Education Research Agenda, prepared for Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, p. 3

[12] G. Cajete, as referenced by Spicer, C. (n.d.). Carrying on Despite the Violent Twentieth Century: A Tenacious History of People's Education, *Creating Learning Communities*; http://www.creatinglearningcommunities.org/book/roots/spicer.html

The expansion of experiential learning – and ensuring access to a broader range of students – was a desire expressed by all constituent groups, whether current students, parents, former students, community members, or educators, both in and beyond Whitehorse. (Wood Street is highly valued, despite concerns about access and potential elitism. Data indicate few students from communities outside Whitehorse have attended Wood Street.) Experiential learning dovetails with brain-based learning and new understandings of adolescent brain development. Experiential learning invites adolescents to be "empowered with opportunities to develop their brains through activities in which they choose to actively participate."[13] As one student notes: *"Not everyone learns through a desk."*

> *"Everyone has different ways of learning . . . classes should not just be focused for kids who can sit at a desk and learn off a chalkboard. Everyone is different."*
>
> - Grade 12 Student

In addition, research on boy learners suggests that the traditional classroom is "generally a better fit for the verbal-emotive, sit-still, takes notes, listen-carefully, multi-tasking girl. Teachers tended to view the natural assets that boys bring to learning – impulsivity, single-task focus, spatial-kinesthetic learning, and physical aggression – as problems."[14] Allowing for more physical movement and visual opportunities, as well as "balancing multi-tasking with project-driven and depth-driven learning"[15] all provide more appropriate learning environments for many males.

Authentic learning can also come via technical-vocational programming (or the arts, as students in the focus groups remind us). Currently only 15.6% of Yukoners hold a trades certificate or diploma; the territory has many opportunities for employment in the skilled trades arena. Interestingly, on the issue of students being prepared for employment, employers answering the survey were not satisfied with the ability of young people to work independently and manage their own work.

> *"I would like more trades . . . there's too much emphasis on academics."*
>
> - Grade 12 Student

Virtually all those who participated in the Secondary School Programming Process identified the need for skilled trades and the fact that these occupations should be more highly valued. The literature suggests that the alignment of school-based and work-based learning, academic and vocational programming, and secondary and post-secondary education; "can eliminate the boundary between academic and vocational education, and combine practice and theory to better educate students in obtaining necessary skills and knowledge."[16] Effective practices in technical vocational education include: high expectations, a rigorous program of study, academic studies, intellectually challenging career/technical studies, work-based learning, teachers working together, students actively engaged, a guidance and adviser system, a structured system of extra help, and a culture of continuous improvement.

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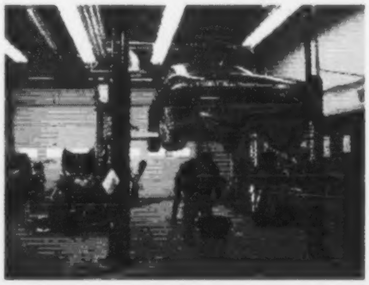
[13] Spano, S. (2003). Adolescent Brain Development, *Youth Studies Australia*, 22(1), p.38.
[14] Ibid, p. 57.
[15] Ibid, p. 59.
[16] Wu, (2004), p. 11.

Apprenticeship is one avenue for young people that is currently a government priority, as each Canadian province and territory governs its own training and certification policies. Again, many people supported the provision of more apprenticeship opportunities for adolescents, although finding qualified teachers who also hold a Red Seal was raised as serious challenge. Educational structures and institutions across the country have had to respond with a multiplicity of approaches including partnerships with employers, unions, and community organizations. The literature suggests a need to bring new groups into the apprenticeship system, form partnerships that are grounded in and reflect the community, secure long term funding, and share what works and does not work in the community: "Make materials available that demonstrate how essential skills are used in apprenticeship. Support generic applied learning initiatives such as applied math, technical and professional communication and applied science. Co-develop courses specific to trades."[17]



Other important pathways include language learning. With the French Immersion population growing proportionately to the English program, secondary programming in French Immersion will continue to be needed. In addition, if a greater emphasis is given to teaching First Nations languages, enhancing the "language nest" concept at F. H. Collins is a logical extension.

Using technology to support distance learning can provide another pathway for secondary education for some students, whether these be students who are living in remote communities, elite athletes, or medically complex students. The technology exists through the use of web-based courses and video-conferencing to provide courses to students at a distance. However, the technology must be viewed as a tool or method, with the focus on learning rather than the technology. Principles include: design for active and effective learning, provide support through a variety of means (tutorial, student advising, counselling, technical support), develop and maintain both the technological and human infrastructure, and sustain administration and commitment to quality distance education. E-learning and video-conferencing can both allow for the connection of students and teachers in real time and aid in the creation of a virtual community of learners.

If students are to find their pathway to learning, they need support. The need for more counselling to help students plan for their lives after secondary school was identified as issue by numerous students. They need assistance with course selection, something that affects all students, but particularly those from communities outside Whitehorse; course selection being based on students' strengths and interests. Students also want more information about options after high school: *"I don't think we get enough information on university, but there is even less on trades."*

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[17] Ibid., p. 27.

Multiple pathways can also mean that students have options to step out and step back into secondary education, or work on completion of their secondary education on a part-time basis. Currently, the Individual Learning Centre (ILC) provides such an option; however, flexible modularized learning can come in different forms, as people noted in the community interviews and public consultation.

Finally, the surveys show that, while everyone believes it is very important for secondary schools to provide students with skills for school success, there are differences in the top priorities among the various constituent groups. Students are more focused on job preparation than are their teachers or parents. However, students are not a homogenous group. Students taking First Nations language courses and those taking technical vocational courses have quite different priorities than their counterparts, including the importance of healthy lifestyles, financial planning, and career preparation.

4. Enhancing Collaboration and Partnerships

In all the interviews with community members (including business/employers, labour, First Nations representatives, Yukon College representatives, community agencies and organizations,) there was an openness to partnering with Education. From the curriculum supports and resources developed by the Vuntut Gwich'in Cultural Technology Project in Old Crow, to a planned labour-related training centre in Whitehorse, to the facilities currently available at Yukon College, community assets abound.

> *"We want to get youth involved in our programs, particularly in health and safety programs . . . [particularly because] of the Yukon's safety record. . . We want to work with Advanced Education and create partnerships . . . we have already signed a partnership with First Nations to encourage First Nations youth to get involved in the trades . . . we are building a training centre . . . we are open to partnerships to deliver programs."*
>
> \- Labour Representative

The same is true when thinking about parents, family, and community members. While much effort has been expended by educators in trying to enhance home-school links, secondary schools often struggle with creating and utilizing these connections. The most promising endeavours appear to be those which use a school community strategic approach that "includes educators, students, parents and community partners who work together to improve the school and enhance students' learning opportunities."[18] Parents of students and former students, particularly in communities outside Whitehorse, express a desire for a better understanding of their child's secondary experience and the implications of programming decisions that are made. Some of those interviewed also suggested that School Councils could be more representative and more effective.

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[18] Epstein, J. L. & Salinas, K. C. (2004). Partnering with Families and Communities, *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 12.

In terms of connecting school with community in meaningful ways, recent Canadian work suggests that educators re-frame their thinking to see themselves as guests in a community first. Only after educators know how to behave as 'guests' can they act as 'hosts.' Being a guest means learning about the community by "spending time and energy to know the context, the history, the culture(s), and particularly the people who reside there."[19] Through such re-framing, educators have the opportunity to view the community-school relationship in new ways. This may open up new possibilities for seeing community resources as assets. Elijah Smith School is one example in Whitehorse of reaching out to community.

Finally, there is the issue of sharing and collaboration among schools. While examples exist of shared programming, some people expressed concern regarding competition among schools. Students admit to teacher and program "shopping." The challenge remains; how to support collaboration and sharing among schools, while retaining their unique cultures and characteristics and avoiding unproductive competition?

5. Supporting Flexibility

Students express some frustration at the traditional high school experience, often because of lack of engagement, irrelevance of curriculum, and unnecessary regimentation. Those attending – as well as those who have attended - Wood Street highly value the Wood Street experience. Current students identified the fact that *"it's not so regulated, no bells, laid back." "You grow up a lot in these programs. It's not getting up, walking to school, going class to class; here every day is different. We are not robots."* As previously discussed, Wood Street programs (with the exception of OPES and PASE) are attended by students from all the Whitehorse secondary schools, as well as some students from other communities. Therefore, Wood Street provides an example of flexible and authentic learning experiences, as well as shared programming.

As previously mentioned, the Individual Learning Centre (ILC) provides an example of a different kind of flexible learning environment. While mentors know and support students as individuals, learners also have flexibility of time and workload. In the public consultations, the ILC was recognized as an important alternative for young people.

Individual
Learning Center

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[19] Ibid., p. 10.

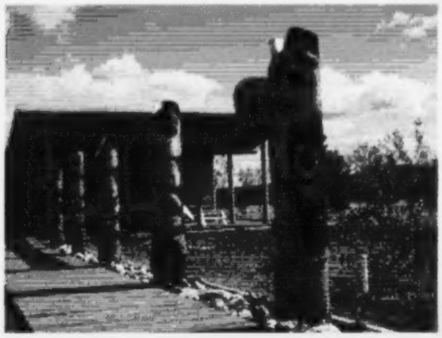
Communities outside Whitehorse, including parents, educators, and community members, suggest a variety of ways to make secondary education more inclusive of their children. Ideas include: having students go to Whitehorse for part of the year while offering intensive courses with master teachers who come to the community for the other part of the school year; having teachers come and assess students the year before they are to go to Whitehorse to determine their skill levels and set up an individual learning plan, if needed; offering experiential (particularly land-based) programs in the communities, open to students from across the territory (*"why can't ACES be delivered here?"*); greater use of distance learning technologies; altered school calendars, such as longer school days in the dark months and shorter when there are more hours of sunlight, or experiential courses in the summer months. There was openness to exploring alternative schedules in the public consultations as well. Advocates of modified calendar schools (year round schooling) point to advantages of more continuous learning, increased student motivation, and decreased teacher burnout and absenteeism. While there is little research on the actual effectiveness of alternative schedules, the literature reminds us that schedule changes should be motivated by what is good for student learning and engagement, not what might be convenient for adults.

In a number of instances (particularly with students and educators) the tie to the British Columbia curriculum and examination schedule was viewed as barrier to flexibility. While Yukon participates in the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol for curriculum development, Yukon-developed curricula are the exception, apparently because of human capacity limitations.

6. Making Strengths Systemic

To make the current strengths of programming systemic and introducing enhancements, educators (including those in the Department of Education) as well as First Nations representatives, cite the need for better tracking of individual students. People identify the need to know what practices are truly effective for learners in Yukon. The educational literature certainly supports the importance of evidence-informed decision-making.

While the Secondary Programming Process was originally focused on secondary programming in Whitehorse, implications range far beyond programming for Whitehorse secondary schools. Students and their families from communities without full secondary programs face issues that are not part of the reality of Whitehorse youth and families. This raises issues beyond transition into secondary school in Whitehorse, such as the possibilities for making the secondary system more flexible so that students have more choices than simply to attend secondary school in



Whitehorse - or not. The lower achievement level of students in rural communities also speaks to systemic issues that appear to need attention, but which are primarily beyond the scope of this process.

Beyond programming, it has been argued that "fundamental systemic change is required for First Nations students and communities to achieve their educational goals."[20] Such system changes include improved communication and expectations between schools and post-secondary institutions, better professional development for educators and para-professionals to help them develop an understanding of Yukon First Nations history, communities and issues, a strategy for increasing the number of First Nations teachers and administrators, as well as attracting and retaining high quality teachers and administrators in rural communities. Again, this may be beyond the scope of this process, but still warrants attention.

If improvements to student learning and engagement at the secondary level are to become realities in Yukon, program enhancement and new facilities are not the long term answers; systemic changes that promote inclusion and excellence for all are the real solutions.

C. CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The following conclusions arise from the previous discussion of the themes emerging from the Secondary Programming Process. The conclusions are followed by proposed directions for the future.

1. Recognizing Strengths and Assets

It can be concluded that:

- Yukon has many educational, community, and environmental assets upon which to draw,
- Student diversity (individual and cultural) should be considered strengths,
- Many programs and supports (including caring and exceptional teachers) exist in Whitehorse secondary schools,
- Secondary school sizes are close to optimal; balancing course options with school sizes that do not overwhelm students.

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[20] Executive Committee of the Education Reform Project. (2007). First Nations students, *Education Reform Project: Final Report*, p. 2.23.

It is recommended that:

a. Programs and supports that are working for students should be maintained (preferably if evidence exists that they are indeed effective);

b. Educator professional development should have a focus on understanding the cultural assets that students bring to their schools and their own learning;

c. One "super" secondary school should not be considered as an option for Whitehorse.

2. Individualizing for Student Success

It can be concluded that:

- There is a need to assess, program, and plan with and for students as individuals, considering that some programs (WELS) may have strayed from their original intentions,
- More needs to be done to support positive transitions for students into secondary school, particularly for those students from communities outside Whitehorse,
- There is a need for high expectations for **all** students (First Nations, boy learners, students with special needs, students with English as an Additional Language) building on their strengths, while supporting any areas that need bolstering,
- There is a need to synchronize programming across Yukon, so students are entering secondary school at comparable academic levels and all students have equitable opportunities as they enter secondary school.

It is recommended that:

a. WELS be discontinued; different options (with a focus on individualization) be developed to support students with specific academic challenges;

b. Existing supports for transition be maintained, with more emphasis being placed on the role of CELCs/ESWs, perhaps having a designated coordinator position jointly funded by Department of Education and Council of Yukon First Nations;

c. The "school within a school" concept for Grades 8 and 9 be implemented in secondary schools, as appropriate to each school;

d. To further support transition, new strategies need to be introduced, prior to students entering Whitehorse secondary schools, which should be developed in consultation with students, families, educators, and First Nations governments;

e. Assessments need to determine the actual academic level of all Whitehorse students prior to entering secondary school, so that plans can be put in place to assist students who require additional supports;

f. Assessment also needs to include assessment of, for, and as learning in order to support student engagement in learning which, in turn, speaks to the need for teacher professional development in this domain;
g. The Department of Education deploy consultants to work with educators in communities to help teachers raise standards and expectations for students in their communities in order to increase educational success.

3. Creating Multiple Pathways

It can be concluded that:

- Some students do not have access to appropriate secondary programming,
- Curriculum in Yukon requires more integration of First Nations history, cultures, and languages,
- French Immersion programming at the secondary level will continue to be needed,
- Expansion of experiential learning opportunities is required,
- Secondary students need more opportunities to be active as participants in their own learning,
- More opportunities for students to complete secondary education, in optional ways and through alternative timeframes, are needed,
- Trades, technical-vocational and apprenticeship opportunities need to be enhanced and viewed as opportunities for all students, not ghettoized,
- Distance learning technologies need to be explored and implemented as multiple options,
- Students and families do not always understand the implications of secondary school course and placement decisions,
- Students need improved supports to assist them in making decisions about secondary and post-secondary options.

It is recommended that:

a. Concerted efforts be made to integrate the First Nations history and cultures in secondary schools, so these are part of education for all,
b. Enhanced and expanded First Nations language programs, that operate in part beyond traditional classroom walls, be available in Whitehorse secondary schools,
c. F. H. Collins continue to host the secondary French Immersion programming with increasing emphasis on the school as a centre for language learning (enhancing the existing "language nest" concept which can include First Nations languages, other languages, and ESL/EAL),
d. Experiential programming be expanded, including programs in Whitehorse secondary schools, as well as programming in other communities,

e. Criteria for entrance into Wood Street programming be reviewed to ensure that all students have equitable access to Wood Street programs,

f. A central community board, with a district coordinator or executive director, be established to coordinate technical-vocational programming in Whitehorse that utilizes existing and future training facilities,

g. A coherent Distance Learning strategy be developed that builds on the technologies available in Yukon in order to give students more flexible options to complete secondary school,

h. Emphasis be placed on career counselling, in terms of students selecting appropriate secondary courses, as well as working towards desired post-secondary options,

i. All pathways lead to graduation.

4. Enhancing Collaboration and Partnerships

It can be concluded that:

- Opportunities exist for multiple partnerships and use of community resources to support secondary programming in Whitehorse,
- Yukon College is an important community resource willing to expand partnerships with Education,
- Government will need to be flexible and act in new ways in order to support innovative partnerships,
- There is a need for increased collaboration and communication with families about options available to their children and the implications of these decisions,
- There is a need for greater valuing and using what families and communities have to offer to education.

It is recommended that:

a. Partnerships with community stakeholders be actively explored, particularly as part of a coordinated Whitehorse technical-vocational strategy (see recommendation 3.f),

b. The Department of Education and Yukon College identify opportunities for enhanced partnering,

c. The Department of Education engage individual communities to work with schools and communities to develop strategies that engage families and communities meaningfully in the life of the school,

d. The role and composition of School Councils be reviewed in order to promote increased family engagement and broader representation.

5. Supporting Flexibility

It can be concluded that:

- Students require more support to determine what programming is best for them (based on their strengths, needs, and interests) and to explore the range of future options open to them,
- Opportunities exist for schools to share programs and facilities without the dynamic of negative competition,
- Communities are open to alternative schedules,
- Curriculum needs to reflect more closely Yukon context and realities.

It is recommended that:

a. Counselling support to secondary students be enhanced to ensure that students (especially those from rural communities) are choosing appropriate courses and understand their post-secondary school options,

b. Technical-vocational, artistic, and experiential programs be open to all secondary students,

c. A new system of secondary education that provides alternatives for completing secondary education be developed (e.g., using distance learning, master teachers in communities, experiential programs in communities),

d. The secondary curriculum offerings be evaluated to determine which courses are appropriate for the Yukon and which need to be locally developed based on Western and Northern Canadian Protocol guidelines and Yukon context.

6. Making Strengths Systemic

It can be concluded that:

- There is a need for tracking student success (evidence-informed practice), as well as a need for increased accountability within the system,
- Implications of secondary programming in Whitehorse affect education beyond Whitehorse,
- There is a need to look at synergies and system-wide vision to support secondary programming.

> *"There's something said when the school makes it all geared up for graduation; that's for leaving and that's what they celebrate. Make us excited about staying."*
>
> \- Grade 12 Student

It is recommended that:

a. A tracking system that follows individual students through their school careers be instituted (including demographics, achievement, attendance),

b. The same academic expectations be applied to students in communities outside Whitehorse, and that these be supported by making education in these communities a priority for Department of Education consultants who can act as mentors and master teachers, assisting teachers with planning, instruction, and assessment.

7. Facility Implications

It can be concluded that:

- There is a need to create caring, healthy environments and welcoming spaces in secondary schools for students, parents/community, and adults in the schools,
- Technical-vocational facilities should be shared and integrated with artistic and academic programming,
- School design literature indicates that a variety of spaces are necessary to support various learning modalities.

It is recommended that:

a. Existing secondary schools be supported to ensure that their facilities, strengths, and unique cultures are maintained and enhanced, as appropriate,

b. Any new facility to replace F. H. Collins Secondary School be designed not as the traditional school "box," but rather as a facility that responds to the latest understanding of student learning and related school design,

c. Technical-vocational programming take advantage (as much as possible) of existing facilities, but that where gaps exist, a new or refurbished facility be used as a central location that can be shared by all secondary schools. This shared facility could also include arts and expanded experiential programming and could connect to community-based programs (e.g., Sundog). In such a facility, schools could bring their own cultures and identities in partnership with community resources,

d. The development of any new facility(ies) includes input from a multi-stakeholder community team.

8. Implementation Implications

This report includes directions for the future that span the short, medium, and long terms. Therefore, it is recommended that:

a. A comprehensive strategy be developed to deal with the recommendations of this report (including priorities, costs, and timelines),
b. An implementation manager (or equivalent) and a multi-constituent team be put in place to ensure the strategy is specified and implemented,
c. This report be made public.

D. CONSULTANT OBSERVATIONS

As the team who has conducted the Secondary Programming Process, we have some observations and reflections on our experiences. First, we were struck by how open and welcoming Yukoners were and how everyone willingly shared personal experiences, perceptions, insights, and suggestions for the future of secondary education in Yukon. We were also impressed by the depth and breadth of the strengths and assets that are present within the education system, the secondary schools in Whitehorse, the Whitehorse community, as well as the rural communities which we visited.

Yukon, like many jurisdictions across Canada, lives with cultural and racial tensions that have the potential to play themselves out in public institutions. Yukon has the advantage of being a "younger" jurisdiction where history may be more easily overcome and Indigenous knowledge and cultures can be viewed as significant assets. These must be recognized in communities outside Whitehorse, where educational stewardship must be promoted and valued. However, the educational system must be cognizant of the fact that the many First Nations families who send their children to secondary school in Whitehorse must deal emotionally with the legacy of residential schools, as well as other systemic barriers. Consequently, any new facility may require focus on a new and culturally responsive educational philosophy which may have to be actualized through a new name, to represent a new beginning. There is incredible opportunity to move forward in the spirit of equity and inclusion.

Finally, we end with optimism. While not particularly "scientific," we felt an energy and excitement about what secondary programming can offer to the future of young Yukoners. The time is NOW to harness the energy for change, resolving past issues, while valuing and building on the many strengths and assets so prevalent in Yukon schools, communities, families, and young people.

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CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

A. APPROACH

Educational stewardship is a concept that was used to inform the approach to this project. "Everyone has responsibility for education. Each individual has a role and responsibility for his/her own education and for the education of others. Everyone is valued for the contribution they make towards education."[21] Therefore, the process was designed to be inclusive; thus engaging students, parents,[22] community members, educators, and other pertinent stakeholders in the process. The process was also intended to respect and value the cultural and linguistic heritage and context of the community.

While grounded in these concepts, the methodology was kept flexible. As was to be expected, the Advisory Committee reviewed the workplan and made suggestions for revision and enhancements. The workplan also evolved in response to changing information needs and community realities. Another important feature of the approach was its staged nature as was desired in the Request for Proposal (RFP). Staging suited the evolving nature of the process. Therefore, Proactive worked with the Project Advisory Committee to ensure the project remained within the required parameters while, at the same time, being responsive.

B. METHODS

The process required multiple methods and entailed primary data collection, as well as the analysis of existing information. Interviews, focus groups, and public consultations were all undertaken by one (or more) of Proactive's professionals. Among the three key consultants, 52 days of in-person data collection and consultation were spent in Yukon between January and June 2008. On the advice of the Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee, the interviews conducted in communities outside Whitehorse were done by the Proactive consultants, rather than by using First Nations Yukon College students trained in data collection techniques.

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[21] "Educational Stewardship" is presented as defined by Helen Robinson-Settee, Director, Aboriginal Education Directorate, Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, and Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy.

[22] In this report, "parent" refers to primary caregivers, who may be parents, family members, or other legal guardians.

1. Consultation with the Secondary School Programming Advisory Committee

In total, six meetings of the Advisory Committee were held during the process. At the first meeting the Project Leader facilitated a discussion concerning the Committee's "vision" for secondary school programming. Advisory Committee members also felt strongly that some schools and school communities had conducted their own visioning and strategic planning processes.[23] While their documents could serve as additional background for the secondary programming process, there was a strong desire to avoid duplication.

As previously mentioned, the Advisory Committee provided advice and feedback throughout the process. They had the opportunity to read the first draft of the Literature Review in the spring and provide suggestions for revision and enhancement. They also reviewed the results as presented in the draft report and provided their input as interpretation and direction for the future.

2. Literature Review

A review of current educational literature was undertaken to help situate secondary school programming in Yukon within secondary education policy and practice in Canada and beyond. Furthermore, the literature review grounds the process in validated practice and provides context for findings and recommendations. While the focus of the literature review was on "validated" practices (that is, those for which evidence of their effectiveness exists), it was expanded based on feedback from the Advisory Committee and the First Nations Programs and Partnerships Unit, to include what are termed "promising practices." The rationale was that some innovative educational practices, particularly in the area of culturally appropriate programming for First Nations students, may not yet have had the chance to undergo formal research or evaluation.

Because the issues of the Secondary Programming Process were far-reaching, the literature review touches on a wide variety of subjects that influence secondary programming. As might be expected, the body of literature on many of these topics is extensive. Therefore, the literature review addresses some fundamental issues in education such as inclusion, student engagement, adolescent development as well as issues relating to minority and marginalized populations. In addition, effective and promising practices, as well as structures and schedules that support student success, are also included. While every effort was made to conduct a comprehensive search of the related literature within the allotted timeframe, the literature review is not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, it presents a synopsis of current trends and research.

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[23] The Francophone School Board chose not to participate directly in the process, although a representative did attend the Advisory Committee meetings and a school visit was made to École Emilie-Tremblay.

Proactive's existing data base on educational research was enhanced to support the literature review for this project. Documents included in the literature review were retrieved through searching relevant databases including, Academic Search Elite, Educational Resource Information Centre (ERIC), Education Index, First Nations Periodical Index, and What Works Clearinghouse. In addition, subsequent searches were conducted of specific journals such as Canadian Journal of Education and the Modern Languages Review and websites. 'Grey literature' (unpublished sources), which often includes conference presentations and proceedings, were also accessed through ERIC and the Canadian Evaluation Society's Grey Literature Database. The review process consisted of an emergent, as opposed to linear process, in identifying key words to guide the search.

The resulting literature review consists of a compilation of both primary and secondary sources, including sources that present a synthesis of relevant findings in the field. Historical overviews, conceptual pieces, and evaluative reports, and conference presentations were included where relevant. Limitations of the literature review include language, where only sources available in English or French were included.

The Advisory Committee had the opportunity to react to the initial outline for the literature review as well as to the first draft. Based on their feedback the literature review was expanded and enhanced on more than one occasion.

The literature review is also presented in an accompanying document. It was thought that, given its scope it might be widely disseminated as a resource document for schools and communities. (See Appendix A for a complete Bibliography.)

3. Inventory of Programs

Department of Education documents, school specific documents and web-sites, as well as direct contact with Department personnel and the schools in Whitehorse were used to create an inventory of existing programs open to secondary school-aged students that are curriculum driven or community designed. In addition, community members provided information through interviews and/or documentation about community-based programs.

A draft of the Inventory was shared with key Yukon Department of Education staff. Their feedback helped to ensure that the Inventory, as it reflects education system programs and services, is comprehensive and accurate. The final section on Community Resources is not intended to be all encompassing; rather it highlights examples of community programs and resources that provide opportunities for alliances or partnerships between the education system and the communities it serves.

4. Analysis of Existing Information

Many different sets of information and data exist that could have been accessed for this study. Those discussed in this section of the report pertain to situations or issues that have relevance to the future of secondary programming and the corresponding facility requirements, including enrolment data, Individual Education Plan (IEP) data, graduation/completion data, as well as pertinent information from other vision/planning reports.

The existing data were provided by the Yukon Department of Education. Data included existing statistics (e.g., enrolment forecasts, data found in the *School Facilities Study*, data found in the Draft First Nations Education Statistics Report), as well as statistics generated at the request of the Proactive consultants (e.g., IEP data by year and school, graduation rates by ethnicity, year, and school). A detailed analysis of enrolment and population projections is not included; rather the *School Facilities Study* is referenced, where appropriate.

The reports or documents that were used as additional sources of information were:

- Bosely, E. and Reid, J. (2008). *Sunrise*. Yukon College,
- Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. (2005). *Plan stratégique 2005-2010,*
- Executive Committee of the Education Reform Project. (2007). *Education Reform Project: Final Report,*
- F.H. Collins Secondary School. (2007). *School Plan Summary,*
- Hold Fast Consultants. (2007). *School Facilities Study: Final Report,*
- *Old Crow* Education *Report.* (2006),
- Patrick Maguire Consulting Services. (2004). *Circle of Caring II,*
- Porter Creek Secondary. (2007). *School Plan Summary,*
- Psychology Centre, The. (2008). *Journey Far Carving Program Outcome Evaluation,*
- Vanier Catholic Secondary School. (2008*). School Goals,*
- Yukon Education. (2007). *Education First Annual Highlights Report*,
- Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee. (2008). *Helping Students Succeed: Vision, goals and priorities for Yukon First Nations Education.*

5. Interviews with Key Department of Education Staff

Sixteen Department of Education staff were interviewed. They provided information not only on programs and government directions, but also on issues, the educational context, and their vision for secondary programming. In some cases, additional meetings were held to clarify or follow-up on particular topics. The consultants also had the opportunity to meet with the Minister of Education to obtain his perspective on issues relating to programming, facilities, and the future of secondary education in Yukon.

All interviews were in-person, except one which was conducted by telephone. They were semi-structured in format, allowing respondents some freedom to raise pertinent issues or ideas that the consultants might not have anticipated. Interviews ranged in length from 40 minutes to well over an hour.

A number of follow-up meetings with Department of Education staff were held to obtain information on aspects, such as enrolment projections and current programming.

6. School Site Visits and Educator Interviews - Whitehorse

The consultants paid site visits to the following schools and educational settings in Whitehorse:

- F. H. Collins Secondary School
- Porter Creek Secondary School
- Vanier Catholic Secondary School
- École Emilie-Tremblay
- Wood Street Centre
- Individual Learning Centre (ILC)
- Riverfront
- Teen Parent Centre
- Gadzoosdaa Residence
- Feeder Schools to F.H. Collins – Elijah Smith Elementary, Golden Horn Elementary, Whitehorse Elementary

In all cases the consultants had a tour of the facility and had the opportunity to talk with the principal/administrator and often with other staff as well. All three of the Proactive consultants visited F.H. Collins Secondary School to see the facility and talk with school administration among others.

7. Community Interviews and Focus Groups - Whitehorse

In total, 73 community stakeholders were interviewed representing people from the public sector (other Territorial government departments), the private sector, labour, and the voluntary sector, including representatives of First Nations organizations or governments,[24] parents and representatives from School Councils, as well as other educators who were identified as having a particular connection to key facets of the Secondary Programming Process. The Secondary School Programming Advisory Committee members identified the initial contacts. Then, as people were interviewed, they identified other key stakeholders in the Whitehorse community.

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[24] While a number of invitations were extended, Kwanlin Dunn First Nation declined to participate.

Specifically, those interviewed included;

- 33 community members,
- 10 parents and school council members,
- 9 First Nations representatives,
- 21 educators.

All interviews, but three, were conducted in-person, again using a semi-structured format. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to an hour and a half. In addition, one focus group was conducted with parents of children with special learning needs.

For purposes of analysis, respondents were placed in one of the following groups: parents/families, First Nations representatives, other community members, other educators. The topics identified for the literature review (and reviewed by the Advisory Committee) were used as a coding framework for the interview data.

8. Community Interviews – Communities Outside Whitehorse

Data collection took place in four communities outside Whitehorse; Old Crow, Ross River, Teslin, and Carcross. These diverse communities, identified in consultation with the First Nations Advisory Committee, the First Nations Programs and Partnerships Unit and the Superintendent of Area 1, were selected because they are among those that do not have secondary education in their community. The community visits included tours of the school in each community, although in one case the school year had officially ended.

Forty people were interviewed including conversations with parents/School Councils, former students, current students, other community members, CELCs, educators, as well as First Nations Chief and Council members (where available).

Specifically, those interviewed included:

- 11 community members,
- 8 parents and school council members,
- 6 First Nations representatives,
- 5 current or recent secondary students,
- 10 educators.

Again interviews were semi-structured and ranged from 10 minutes with a current student to a two hour session with one School Council. In addition, two parents of former students who had attended secondary school in Whitehorse sent follow-up emails describing their child's experiences with secondary school.

9. Student Focus Groups

Seven focus groups were conducted with a total of 61 students. Each secondary school was asked to convene a group of ten Grade 12 students that represented the diversity of their student body and that included an equal number of females and males. (See Appendix B for a copy of the information provided to schools and a copy of the moderator's guide.) At Wood Street, Grade 11 students participated. An additional group comprised of students in the WELS program was conducted at F.H. Collins to ensure that the voice of these students was included. Two focus groups were conducted at the Gadzoosdaa Residence; one with boys and one with girls.

Each group was facilitated by a Proactive consultant, using a semi-structured moderator's guide. Students were asked about their school, about the courses they had taken, issues that should be included in the upcoming student survey, and what should be included in any new secondary school in terms of both programming and facilities. The students at Gadzoosdaa were also asked about their experiences at the residence. Groups were approximately 40 to 45 minutes in duration.

10. Student Survey

All secondary students in Whitehorse were to be given the opportunity to complete an on-line survey. School administrators were sent administration instructions and a paper version was also provided for use with any students whose literacy level was such that they needed assistance reading the questions. No schools chose to use this option. Schools were given two weeks in which to have students complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was developed in consultation with secondary school administrators and a Superintendent who provided useful feedback on the draft instrument. Once revised, the questionnaire was submitted to the Department of Education for final approval. In addition to background demographics (e.g., gender, program, home community), the questionnaire included items relating to risk and success factors, school engagement, purpose of secondary school, and secondary school programming. A core of questions about secondary education was used on this questionnaire as well as on the staff and community surveys. (For a copy of the questionnaire, see Appendix C.)

A total of 891 students responded to the survey. For this report, analysis was conducted on the total number of responses; however, each secondary school in Whitehorse received its own analysis and a two page summary highlighting key results and comparisons to the staff survey, where applicable.

11. Staff Survey

All staff in Whitehorse secondary schools (educators, para-professionals, CELCs, support staff) were to be given the opportunity to complete a web-based survey. The staff had the same two week period in May 2008 to complete the questionnaire.

As with the student survey, a group of secondary administrators and a Superintendent provided input on the draft instrument. Once revised, the questionnaire was submitted to the Department of Education for final approval. The final questionnaire included demographics, such as school role and length of time at their current school, as well as questions on the purpose of secondary school and secondary school programming directions.

A total of 136 staff responded to the survey. As with the student survey, analysis for this report is based on the total number of respondents. Schools received their individual results. (See Appendix D for Staff Survey data.)

12. Community Survey

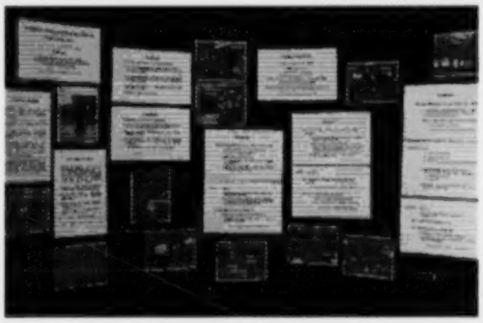
A web-based community survey was developed and the link put on the Yukon Department of Education's home page. Paper versions with postage paid business reply envelopes were available at the Department of Education and were also distributed in each community visited by the Proactive consultants. The questionnaire was shared as a paper draft and then was put up "live" for testing by Department of Education and Proactive staff. Once the survey was approved and finalized, it was available on-line from May 15th to July 11th.

In total, 85 parents and community members responded to the survey, of whom 77 were from Whitehorse. The questionnaire included demographic items (e.g., type of respondent, community in which they live) as well as the same set of core items found on the staff and student surveys. (See Appendix E for Community Survey data.)

13. Public Consultations

A strong suggestion from the Whitehorse community interviews was that, if public consultations were to be held, they should present some options, rather than be too open ended. Therefore, three scenarios were developed based on the interviews and focus groups, the initial survey results, and discussion with the Advisory Committee. Department of Education staff and the Advisory Committee were also consulted on the timing and location of the consultations.

The consultations were advertised in the Whitehorse newspaper WHAT on two occasions. Information on the community web-survey was also included. The consultations were held on June 20th and June 23rd. On June 20th the Territorial Building was used for the consultation between the hours of 11:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. On June 23rd the Elijah Smith Building housed the consultation between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. A large sandwich board placed on the outside sidewalk directed people to the venue.



A large display, with background and contextual information, presented three possible scenarios for the future of secondary programming in Whitehorse. Each scenario had multiple elements. Community members were interviewed by the Proactive consultants and asked to identify which elements of each scenario they liked and which they disliked. They were also asked if they had any questions or additional comments about each scenario.

A total of 35 people provided feedback on the scenarios, including former students, parents, retired educators, politicians, and interested community members.

14. Other Activity

The consultants from Proactive met with First Nations Education Advisory Committee to explain the process and obtain advice on how best to elicit input from selected communities outside Whitehorse.

Two Proactive consultants also attended a portion of the Transitions Day on February 29, 2008 that was a joint initiative of the Association of Yukon School Administrators (AYSA) and the First Nations Education Advisory Committee (FNEAC).

C. Challenges and Considerations

A significant challenge of the project was the timeframe, given the comprehensive nature of the study process. As anticipated, the timeframe was adjusted, with the draft report prepared for late August rather than mid-June. This allowed for more extensive data collection, including the consultant visits to four communities outside Whitehorse. However, the fact that the public consultations had to be held in late June may have limited public response, despite the multiple efforts made to publicize the consultations.

The size and diversity of the project Advisory Committee was both a strength and a challenge. While it was difficult to schedule meetings that were convenient for all and sometimes challenging to ensure input from everyone, the diverse nature of the group provided many perspectives. While there was also a change in the representation from a number stakeholder groups and in Departmental representation, the Advisory Committee was, for the most part, able to move forward in their discussions without revisiting old decisions.

Response rates were not equivalent across schools on the staff and student surveys. However, the numbers overall are large enough to provide a measure of confidence, particularly as the survey data are coupled with information from school visits and student focus groups.

Given the number of respondents to the Community Survey, the results cannot be viewed as representative of the community. However, the survey was open to all and available in both paper and web-based formats, thus giving opportunities for participation. It can be viewed as one indicator of the perspective of interested parents and community members, but the limitations of the results should be recognized.

Finally, discrepancies were identified in some of the existing data provided for secondary analysis. Overall Individual Education Plan (IEP) data for 2007-2008 by school (May 2008) showed significantly lower numbers of students at each Whitehorse secondary school with IEPs as compared to other school data provided. Data on enrolment at Wood Street had numerous calculation errors which were corrected to the extent possible. Also, the five and six year graduation by school by First Nations/Non-First Nations tables do not allow for the calculation of graduation rates for students who did not start at the secondary school in Grade 8, as it is not possible to determine with certainty the number of students coming into the schools in subsequent years. Also, it is recognized that a variety of factors have the potential to affect the accuracy of enrolment projections over the coming years. Despite defined catchment areas, families can choose among a variety of program and school options.

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CHAPTER 4: LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Introduction

1. Preamble – The Context for Educational Renewal

The process of examining secondary programming in Whitehorse arises as a follow-up to a school facilities study and will be used in part to plan for the future of F.H. Collins Secondary School. The work also represents the initial step in a larger process of creating a secondary education system responsive to the needs and changing realities of secondary students in Yukon. The examination of secondary programming will articulate a vision for secondary programming with the best interests of learners at its core.

> *Schools must also be assessed in terms of their overall contributions to social justice and human and community development.*
>
> - Wotherspoon & Schissel (1998)

Within this context, a review of the relevant educational literature is grounded in an educational "renewal" paradigm. Educational "reform," on the other hand, confines educational change and improvement to a narrow domain, the over-riding purpose of which is utilitarian in nature and directly related to economic/individual gain. Goodlad attributes the pervasive failure of reform efforts to the invariable tendency for reform initiatives to be excessively linear and authoritarian in their approach to change processes: "what has been grossly overestimated in school reform is the galvanizing power of panaceas tied to purposes poorly reflecting human aspiration. Perhaps this is why we have had such a succession of them and so much failure."[25]

An educational "renewal" paradigm places issues of equity and social justice "at the very heart of the educational enterprise."[26] The ultimate aim of public schooling thus becomes the creation and preservation of "a space of dialogue, a space where a web of relationships can be woven, and where a common world can be brought into being and continually renewed."[27] An extensive amount of literature promotes this aim of schooling advocating for social justice, multiculturalism, citizenship, anti-bias, character development and notions of democracy. It is within this understanding of educational improvement and renewal that we are situating the literature review. (See Appendix A for the complete Bibliography.)

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[25] Goodlad, J.I. (1997).
[26] Taylor, E. (2003).
[27] Greene, M. (1984). Excellence, Meanings, and Multiplicity. *Teachers College Record*, 86(2), 283-297.

2. Purpose of the Literature Review

A synopsis of the current educational literature on relevant topics helps to position Yukon's secondary school policy and practices within the Canadian and international contexts. As the Secondary Programming Process is intended to be forward looking and to build on successful practices, current programs and practices in Yukon can be held up against the validated and promising practices as described in the educational literature.

Therefore, the literature review has been structured in three major sections the first of which addresses some fundamental issues in education, such as the philosophy of inclusion, student engagement, and educational issues relating to minority and marginalized populations. The second section focuses on instruction and assessment, including sub-sections specific to First Nations and Aboriginal populations and to technical vocational education, both of which were identified as important in the original Request for Proposals. The third section is related more closely to structures and facilities, including a discussion of optimum school size, campus options, and shared facilities. The concluding section draws together the themes that pervade the discussion in the previous sections.

So, what practices work – or are likely to be effective - in the education of secondary school students in Yukon? While recognizing education takes place in vastly different contexts across Canada and the world and that the Yukon context has its own unique characteristics, evidence from elsewhere helps to guide the development of recommendations and, ultimately, to inform educational decision-making. Thus, the literature review is a foundational component of the Secondary School Programming Process.

3. Focus on Effective and Promising Practices

This literature review is focused on effective ('validated') and promising practices. Effective or validated practices are those for which there is 'evidence' of positive impact. So what constitutes 'evidence' in education? Without revisiting the qualitative/quantitative debate, a widely accepted view is that a variety of research methods produce evidence, and, that all evidence need not be quantitative.[28]

Hammersley, for one, warns of an over-emphasis on quantitative methods, drawing on the lessons learned from evaluation research:

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[28] See: Clegg. (2005); Mertens and McLaughlin (2004); Thomas, G. (2004). Introduction: evidence and practice, *Evidence-Based Practice in Education* (eds. Thomas and Pring), pp. 1-18; Mertens and McLaughlin (2004); Odom, S. L., Brantlinger, L. et al (2005). Research in Special Education: Scientific Methods and Evidence-Based Practices, *Exceptional Children*, (71)2, pp. 137-148.

> Little seems to have been learned from the history of evaluation research, which began with an approach that was very similar to what is now being advocated on the model of randomized controlled trials in medicine. The weakness of such an approach, particularly in seeking to evaluate social interventions, soon came to be recognized, and a variety of alternative strategies were developed.[29]

While randomized controlled trials were historically considered the 'gold standard,' problems existed in applying these trials to either social or educational interventions. "Randomization and control often could not be applied to real world problems and were not necessarily sensitive to local and contextual factors . . . . [they] were often too difficult or costly. Because of these issues, evidence-based research emerged."[30]

Indeed there are many standards for judging evidence in educational research. Oakley, for example, suggests that sound research evidence must address the criteria of scientific validity, high quality and practical relevance, with a systematic approach being "at the core" of gathering such evidence.[31] Thomas, refers to relevance, sufficiency, and veracity.[32]

Educational systems are complex and classrooms, with their unpredictability, are not clinical laboratories. According to Luntely; "classrooms (and other educational units) share a common structural feature with other social and natural systems – namely, nonlinearity. Ignore this and you get faulty logic and misunderstanding of the system at issue."[33]

Another consideration concerns the notion that "there are different ways of knowing the world, and thereby, investigating it."[34] In the transformative paradigm a central focus is placed on the experiences of marginalized groups where the researcher "links the results of the inquiry to wider questions of social inequity and social justice . . . transformative research has the potential to contribute to the enhanced ability to assert rigor in the sense that ignored or misrepresented views are included."[35] Similarly, feminists exposing the power relations inherent in professional practice –

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[29] Hammersley, M. Some questions about evidence-based practice in education, *Evidence-Based Practice in Education* (eds. Thomas and Pring), p. 134.

[30] Henderson, Karla A. (2004). Opening Address SEER 2003: Got Research in Experiential Education? Theory and Evidence, *Journal of Experiential Education*, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3907/is_200401/ai_n9394335

[31] Oakley, A. (2000). *Experiments in Knowing: Gender and Method in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Policy Press, as cited in Thomas, G. (2004), p. 10.

[32] Thomas, G. (2004), p. 5.

[33] Luntley, M. (2000). *Performance, Play and Professionals*. London: Philosophical Association of Great Britain, p. 17, as cited in Pring, R. Conclusion: evidence-based policy and practice, *Evidence-Based Practice in Education* (eds. Thomas and Pring), p. 205.

[34] Adams St. Pierre, E. (2002). "Science" Rejects Postmodernism, *Educational Researcher*, 31(8), 26.

[35] Mertens and McLaughlin. (2004), p. 4.

and supported by the African-American community, disability campaigners and gay activists – have raised questions regarding the legitimacy of mainstream professional authority.[36]

Related to "other ways of knowing" is the dichotomy between "evidence-based" and "evidence-informed" policy and practice. This difference is not to be underestimated. Evidence-informed suggests that the explicit knowledge of educators derived from reflective and critical scrutiny of their own experiences has value.[37] As Clegg also notes, "debates about 'evidence' are being used to reposition practitioner knowledge as inferior"[38] thus, devaluing the experiences and knowledge gained by educators interacting with students in real life contexts. Therefore, the inclusion of 'promising practices,' particularly as they relate to the field of education for Aboriginal and First Nations students, addresses other ways of knowing and respects the experiences of educators and their communities.

4. Methodology

In literature searches peer-reviewed primary and secondary sources, policy documents, both publicly and privately funded final research reports, including the 'grey literature' (unpublished sources), are sought. Conference presentations and proceedings are useful sources for accessing unpublished, but potentially informative, research.

Documents included in the literature review were retrieved through searching relevant databases.[39] A subsequent search was conducted of specific journals and websites. Other sources have also been consulted in the preparation of the literature review. These include: monographs and edited texts; journals of professional associations such as the *Canadian Education Association*; peer adjudicated reviews such as *The Canadian Journal of Education*; newsletters outlining recent educational research such as *Education Update*; and, Yukon Education policy and practice documents. Sources were accessed both in paper and electronic formats.

While every effort was made to conduct a comprehensive search of the related literature within the allotted timeframe, given the breadth of this literature review, it is quite likely that other relevant studies and publications exist in the educational literature that are not cited.

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[36] Clegg, S. (2005), p. 419.

[37] Cordingley, P. (2004). Teachers using evidence: using what we know about teaching and learning to reconceptualize evidence-based practice, *Evidence-Based Practice in Education* (eds. Thomas and Pring), p. 79.

[38] Clegg, S. (2005), p. 426.

[39] Electronic databases searched include ERIC, Education Index, CBCA Education, and Academic Search Elite.

B. Fundamentals

1. School Purpose

The Guiding Principles and Assumptions of the Yukon Secondary School Programming Process indicate that "providing the best education possible for young people should drive programming."[40] As a result, research focused around secondary school programming must begin with an understanding of the purpose of public education in general, and in Yukon in particular.

While the purpose of public education may appear self-evident, further reflection indicates it is a far more complex notion than first meets the eye. In fact, there has been considerable attention paid to this question in educational literature. However, two prevailing ideologies regarding school purpose emerge. One of these ideologies connects school purpose to economics. Education was framed in terms of "improving the economic opportunities of individuals and groups."[41]

The second places public education as "the primary foundation of any civilized democracy."[42] First espoused by John Dewey with the publication of *Democracy in Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* in 1916, the notion of education as an important under-pinning of a democratic society was born. Many others followed, echoing Dewey's perspectives. Deborah Meier highlights that "the traditional function of schools [is] to pass on the skills, aptitudes, and habits needed for a democratic way of life."[43] John Goodlad agrees, stating the primary purpose of schooling is to educate students in "the democratic ideals of humankind, the freedoms and responsibilities of democratic society, and the civil and civic understandings and dispositions necessary to democratic citizenship."[44]

In order to put this into practice, schools must organize themselves in such a way as to ensure they are developing democratic skills and values though modeling and in practice.[45] Democratic schools are the result of deliberate efforts by educators to create equitable learning communities which link innovation in schools to worldwide change. They are structurally fashioned after democratic principles. Perhaps more importantly, they model aspects of democracy in all that they do, in so far as learning opportunities are tailored to provide students with democratic experiences.[46]

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[40] Proactive Information Services. (2008). *Secondary School Programming Process Proposed Guiding Assumptions and Principles.*

[41] Meier, D. (2002). So What Des It Take to Build A School For Democracy? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85(1), p. 15.

[42] Ralston Saul, J. (2002). In Defence of Public Education, *Horizons*, p. 8.

[43] Meier, D. (2002). p. 15.

[44] Goodlad, J. (2003/4). Teaching What We Hold Sacred. *Educational Leadership*, 61(4), p. 20.

[45] Harber, C. *School Effectiveness and Education for Democracy and Non-Violence.*

[46] Thordason, J. & Belanger, D. (2007). A Review of Literature – Education for Social Change: Supporting School Success for Marginalized Populations in C. McDonald & J. Tanaks (Eds). *Experiences of the Roma Education Initiative.* Budapest: Open Society Institute.

Our Vision . . . is that all Yukoners have the knowledge, skills and abilities to participate effectively in their work and communities and to be lifelong learners.

Handbook for Yukon Teacher 2007-2008.

Yukon Education articulates a vision and mission for all learners focused on both economic and community participation. Furthermore, the Department's Guiding Principles outline strong relationships with partners and community, respecting cultural and linguistic diversity, involving community, and respecting Elders and traditional knowledge, all in an environment of honesty, integrity and accountability.[47] Yukon's commitment to partnering with community and First Nations refers to democratic processes, while supporting the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities for economic, social, and community success. Focusing on education for social participation not only creates links between schools and their communities, but also creates empowerment, individual agency, and social responsibility in young people.

2. Philosophy of Inclusion

The assumptions of the Yukon Secondary Programming Process outlines that "programming should build on the strengths of all learners and should take place in a supportive learning environment, responsive to the needs and changing realities of secondary students and their communities."[48] In Yukon and across Canada, inclusion provides the context for the education of all students. Canadian educators strive to include all students within general classroom settings to the greatest extent possible. The Research Alliance for Children with Special Needs, a Canadian interdisciplinary research consortium, refers to inclusion as:

> ...a philosophy that views the classroom as involving all children. The expectations of inclusive practice are that the individual learning needs of all children will be met, children with disabilities will develop the social skills that are necessary for successful peer relationships, and meaningful social relationships with typically developing peers will occur as familiarity increases.[49]

Within Yukon, inclusion is defined in the 1995 publication *Special Programs Service: A Handbook of Procedures and Guidelines* as:

> The value system which holds that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education. The practice of

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[47] Yukon Education. (2007). *Handbook for Yukon Teachers*, p. 5.

[48] Proactive Information Services. (2008). *Secondary School Programming Process Proposed Guiding Assumptions and Principles.*

[49] Specht, J., Currie, M., Killip, St., King, G., Burton, M., Eliav, J., Lambert, S., & Thornton, B. (2001). Educators' Attitudes Toward Inclusion. *Focus On*, 1(3), p. 1.

> inclusion transcends the idea of physical location, and *incorporates basic values that promote participation, friendship* and interaction. *(p. 4)*

These statements clearly outline inclusion as an overarching philosophy guiding the education of **all** students and contingent upon social policies defining education not as a privilege, but as a human right provided regardless of race, ethnicity, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, gender, age, or mental or physical disability ability.[50] It is important to note these definitions place any onus for change squarely on the shoulders of policy makers and educators: "instead of making the individual student fit into existing school programs, it is the schools that need to change in major ways to ensure the learning success of a growing diversity of students in our communities."[51]

Instead of making the individual student fit into existing school programs, it is the schools that need to change in major ways to ensure the learning success of a growing diversity of students in our communities.

Lupart, 2000.

Literature proliferates with information regarding the benefits of inclusion for all students and staff. Schattman and Benay contend inclusion provides a framework for good education for all students to "...achieve their potential in a normal educational environment."[52] By asserting assumptions such as equal access, non-discrimination, and social opportunity, inclusion fosters the growth of all students.

Director of the Canadian Education Association, Crista Freiler, indicates parallels between inclusion in educational settings and in the larger context of Canadian communities: "social inclusion is about ensuring that all children, youth and adults are valued respected and contributing members of their communities."[53] Furthermore, inclusive schools and communities have a:

> 'dual imperative' to work towards social inclusion: a moral imperative to advance human dignity; and an economic imperative to harness the creative potential of citizens, engage diverse populations; and ensure that young people are educated and engaged to keep the economy going.[54]

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[50] This is guaranteed under Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

[51] Lupart, J. (2000). Inching Toward Inclusion: The Excellence/Equity Dilemma. In Y. Lenoir, W. Hunter, D. Hodgekinson, P. de Broucker, & A. Dolbec, (Eds). *A Pan-Canadian Education Research Agenda*, p. 215.

[52] Schattman, R., and Benay, J. (1992). Inclusive practices transform special education in the 1990's, *The School Administrator, 49*(2), p. 30.

[53] Freiler, C. (2007/8). Building Inclusive Cities and Communities, *Education Canada*, 48(1), p. 41.

[54] MacIssac, R. (2006). Strengthening Social Infrastructure: Meeting the Challenge of Social Inclusion, Presentation to the conference of the Association of Municipalities in Ontario, as quoted in Freiler, C. (2007/8). Building Inclusive Cities and Communities, *Education Canada*, 48(1), p. 40.

Inclusion and Integration

Given this legal and social policy framework, it is reasonable to conclude that inclusion is here to stay. However, considerable ambiguity regarding the definition of inclusion has led to confusion. Educators often confuse inclusion with terms such as 'mainstreaming'[55] or 'integration' that refer more specifically to placement decisions within the philosophy of inclusion.

The term 'integration' is also used in the Yukon context, meaning:

> …the major strategies used to achieve an inclusive philosophy. Integration sees student with special needs included in educational setting with their peers who do not have special needs, and provided with the necessary accommodations and adaptations, determined on an individual basis, to enable them to be successful there. The principle of "placement in the most enabling learning environment" applies when decisions are made about the extent to which an individual student is placed in regular classrooms, or assigned to an alternative placement.[56]

The fundamental question regarding service delivery for all students is not where to educate the child, but how best to meet the student's needs. In the decision *Eaton vs. Brant County Board of Education* (1997), the Supreme Court of Canada stipulated placement decisions must reflect "the child's best interest and special needs."[57] From an inclusive perspective, the starting point in meeting students' needs is the classroom.

Research also details the qualities needed for the successful inclusion of all students, including flexibility and diverse problem-solving, shared responsibility for student success, as well as a commitment to a climate conducive to learning.[58] In addition, students in today's schools value all children within their learning environments; they "consider it right and natural for students with learning and behavioral difficulties to be in their classes."[59]

While the most desirable setting when considering integration is usually the regular classroom, this does not preclude students spending time outside the regular classroom, provided placement decisions are guided by the learner's individual needs. Placement decisions in Yukon occur within the framework of the most enabling/least restrictive environment. Within this framework the placement or environment in which a student is educated exists:

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[55] Yukon Education. (1995). *Special Programs Service: A Handbook of Procedures and Guidelines* defines mainstreaming as "…a term which was in use during the early years of the movement toward integration of student with special needs, but which has been replaced by the term 'integration,'" p. 5.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Dworet, D & Bennett, S., (2002). A View from the North, Special Education in Canada. *Teaching Exceptional Children*. 34(5), p. 26.

[58] Lipsky, D. & Gartner, A. (1997). Inclusion and School Reform: Transforming America's Classrooms. Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks Publishing, pp. 99-100.

[59] Miller, M. (2008). What do Students Think About Inclusion, *Phi Delta Kappan*. 89(5), p. 391.

> . . . on a continuum from least to most segregated or from typical to atypical. Generally, regular classrooms in neighbourhood schools are seen as least restrictive or least segregated or most typical. Special classes in residential institutions are seen as most restrictive or most segregated or least typical. Other settings in schools such as resource rooms on a partial or full-time basis are part of this continuum. This continuum of educational placements is referred to as the Cascade model.[60]

Mirroring effective practice when considering student placement, Yukon policy indicates wherever possible "the needs of all students are dealt with in the regular classroom"[61] with support by a school-based team.

3. Student Engagement

If education in Yukon, in Canada and beyond, functions within a paradigm of inclusion, all students must be engaged participants in their learning. Inclusion creates not only a moral and pedagogical imperative to engage students, but also a legal prerogative. Most educators intuitively understand this concept; unfortunately, putting into practice a framework for student engagement is more elusive.

While there is a considerable body of literature focusing on student engagement in learning, definitions of engagement differ. Some views of student engagement, such as that professed by H. M. Marks, focus more strongly on psychological factors such as effort, attention, interest or investment. Others indicate student engagement is more about relationships and is built upon notions of student involvement and a sense of belonging.[62] However, it appears that a more holistic approach to student engagement, one which acknowledges divergent elements, may present a more useful model for educators.

Lorna Earl and Linda Lee, within their evaluation of the Manitoba School Improvement Program Inc., developed a model elaborating the dimensions of student engagement. Within this model, student engagement is divided into two pillars – students' connection to school and the learning environment, and students' relationship to their own learning.[63]

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[60] Yukon Education. (1995). *Special Programs Service: A Handbook of Procedures and Guidelines*, p. 5.

[61] Ibid., p. 2.

[62] Wading through literature about the definitions of student engagement can be extensive, although a brief précis is elaborated in Klem, A. & Connell, J. (2004). Relationships Matter: Linking Teacher Support to Student Engagement and Achievement. *Journal of School Health*, 74(7) p. 262.

[63] Earl, L. & Lee, L. (1998). Evaluation of the Manitoba School Improvement Program Inc. Toronto: Walter & Duncan Gordon Foundation.

Engagement and the Learning Environment

Examining the first pillar, the connection to the learning environment, incorporates elements of a positive school climate, as well as a sense of pride and belonging at school. In a sense, this is students 'engaging with or connecting to the school.' Sue Roffey examines situations which foster belonging and caring including ensuring fairness, the possibility for success, and encouraging students to take responsibility.[64]

The importance of relationships, those between staff and students as well as those between students, is essential:

> We ignore at our peril the importance of relationships in education . . . . The kids most left behind in our schools – those who flail and sputter while others, by comparison float blithely along – need those relationships most of all. They need to feel that their teachers believe in them and will buoy them if they start to sink.[65]

Nel Noddings, a leading figure in the philosophy of education, elaborates on staff/student relationships by proposing an 'ethos of caring' in education. She indicates it is not enough for educators to 'care' about students in the sense of a moral virtue, rather educators are to develop 'relational caring,' where "the cared-for recognizes the caring and responds in some detectable manner."[66] Establishing caring relationships provides a foundation of caring upon which all teacher/student interaction is based. Earl and Lee echo this notion when they talk of "a caring ethos." In the most successful MSIP schools teachers "shared a deep and pervasive caring for their students as individuals and their students knew it . . . . [the definition of caring was] a concerned, consistent and relentless attention to students."[67]

In turn, positive staff/student relationships help foster a learning environment of respectful and positive student to student relationships: "Adults need to model this habit of mind they want their students to adopt – good judgment, exercise of reason, respect of differences, a willingness to try new things, and the courage to ask hard questions."[68]

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[64] Roffey, S. (2007).Taking Account of Emotions in Student-Teacher Relationships. *Raising Achievement Update*, page number not available.

[65] Meier, D. (2005). The Student-Teacher Relationship: Our Most Important "Data" Source. *Harvard Education Letter*. Page number not available.

[66] Noddigs, N. (2005). Caring in Education. The Encyclopedia of Informal Education at www.infed.org/biblio/noddings_caring_in_education.htm. Page number not available.

[67] Earl, L. & Lee, L. (1998), p. 69.

[68] Meier, D. (2005). The Student-Teacher Relationship: Our Most Important "Data" Source. *Harvard Education Letter*. Page number not available.

Students also must feel safe in their learning environment which includes safety from bullying and harassment: "Young people who do not feel safe and valued will find it difficult, or even impossible to focus on academics or relationships with classmates."[69] Within a learning environment of caring relationships, positive climate, pride and belonging, students are able to engage and have a voice in their learning: "these relations provide the foundation for successful pedagogical activities. First we listen to our students, we gain their trust, and in an on-going relation of care and trust, it is more likely students will accept what we try to teach."[70]

There is a strong relationship between student engagement and student voice. In fact, student voice is engendered by what Noddings and others describe as caring relationships: 'voice' signals having a legitimate perspective and opinion, being present and taking part, and/or having an active role in decisions about and implementation of educational policies and practice."[71] Within the literature, student voice is often framed within 'rights' and 'respect,' not only linking it to engagement, but also to principles of a democratic school.

Student engagement not only encourages attendance, it fosters academic success: "researchers have found student engagement a robust predictor of student achievement and behavior at school…Students engaged at school are more likely to earn high grades and test scores and have lower drop out rates."[72]

Engagement and Students' Connection to Their Own Learning

The second pillar of Earl and Lee's dimensions of student engagement is students' connection to their own learning. While students may be connected to school as a learning environment, they may not be connected to their own learning. They may not have the motivation or the confidence in their ability to succeed. In addition, they need to be interested in the curriculum they follow and readily see the relevance of what they are learning. In the words of Deanna Kuhn, it is important that educators 'make school make sense' for learners to believe and engage in their learning.[73]

Much of the current education literature advocates for students as active participants in their own learning. 'Student-centered' learning implies the degree to which the educational environment allows for and encourages students to communicate their own experience:

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[69] Klassen-St. Pierre, C. (not dated). Where is the Love? Towards a Curriculum of Care in Our Schools, unpublished paper presented to Department of Graduate Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa, p. 11.

[70] Noddings, N. (2005). Caring in Education. The Encyclopedia of Informal Education at www.infed.org/biblio/noddings_caring_in_education.htm. Page number not available.

[71] Cook-Sather, A. (2006). Cound, Presence and Power: Student Voice in Educational Research and Reform. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 36(4), p. 362.

[72] Klem, A. & Connell, J. (2004). Relationships Matter: Linking Teacher Support to Student Engagement and Achievement. *Journal of School Health*, 74(7) pp. 262-263.

[73] Kuhn, D. (2007). How to Produce a High-Achieving Child. Phi Delta Kappan, 88(10), p. 762.

> learning which develops intelligence and character does not come about when only the textbook and the teacher have a say; every individual becomes educated only as s/he has an opportunity to contribute something from his/her experience, no matter how meager or slender that background of experience may be at a given time; enlightenment comes from the give and take, from the exchange of experiences and ideas.[74]

Building on their own experiences is one avenue for creating students' commitment to learning. In addition, Kuhn outlines further specifics regarding fostering curriculum interest and relevance:

> . . . centre curriculum on educational activities whose purpose and value are readily apparent to those who partake in them....[In addition,] we need to make school more connected to the adult life it is intended to prepare student for . . . They [students] should be able to make use of [the intellectual activities and tools they acquire at school] for their own purposes and to see the fruits of their labors, recognizing the intellectual skills, such as inquiry and argument, give them a most productive path for answering questions, solving problems, resolving conflicts, and participating in a democratic society.[75]

Again, engagement in their own learning provides students with a pathway to success, not only in school, but also to their post-high school lives.

4. Adolescent Development

The Adolescent Brain

The physiognomy and biological makeup of the human brain have fascinated scientists for centuries. However, developments in imaging technology in the latter part of the 20th century allowed for the rapid expanding of neuroscience by freeing it from its previous dependence on post-mortem examinations. These technologies include computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), electroencephalography (EEG), and positron emission tomography (PET), to name only the most common.[76] The refinement of these technologies has allowed scientists to make new discoveries into brain development throughout the lifespan.

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[74] Dewey, J. (1946). *The Problems of Men.* Philosophical Library: New York, p. 36.

[75] Ibid., p. 760.

[76] Phillips, J. (2005). From Neuron to Brainpower: Cognative Neuroscience and Brain-Based Learning. ERIC document # ED490546, pp 8-9.

Beginning in the 1990's, the National Institute for Mental Health in the United States began longitudinal studies using imaging technology to study brain development of the same cohort of subjects over time. These and other studies concluded that our previous understanding of brain development was not accurate. Previously, it was believed; "...the major wiring of the brain was completed by as early as three years of age and that the brain was fully mature by the age of 10 or 12."[77] However, Aaron White of Duke University and others now believe "the brain continues to undergo a considerable amount of development throughout adolescence and into early adulthood."[78]

The changes occurring in the brain during adolescence are complex and involve different types of brain matter and different regions. Scientists agree that the area of greatest brain development in adolescence is in the frontal lobe, which comprises a large portion of brain's neocortex:

> Frontal lobe grey matter, which reflects dense concentrations of neuronal tissue (i.e. nerve cells), particularly cell bodies and dendrites, reaches its peak at around age 11-12 and then decreases throughout adolescence. The decrease in grey matter probably reflects two separate processes: pruning and mylenation.[79]

The pruning process is based on the principle of the economy of organisms. Basically, pruning follows the 'use it or lose it' principle, "where connections among neurons in the brain that are not used whither away, while those that are used stay...It is thought that this pruning process makes the brain more efficient...."[80] While there are many sources which cite pruning as part of normal brain development, that does not mean that the certain learning possibilities are completely time-limited. In fact, Janet Phillips cautions; 'the idea of 'use it or lose it' is an exaggeration of the truth, and it is now known that lifelong learning does indeed occur. In other words 'you can teach old dogs new tricks.'"[81]

Mylenation involves the white matter of the brain, the "wire-like fibers that establish neurons' long-distance connection between brain regions."[82] Changes in the frontal lobe continue throughout adolescence, with this region not reaching full maturity until into the early 20s.[83] The brain's frontal lobe controls self-control, judgment, emotional regulation, and organization. However, brain development during adolescence is not limited to changes in the frontal lobe. In addition, 'the corpus callosum, a thick bundle of axons that allows the two cerebral hemispheres to communicate with one another, increases in size during adolescence.'[84]

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[77] Spano, S. (2003). Adolescent Brain Development. *Youth Studies Australia*, 22(1), p. 36.

[78] White, A. (2003). Substance Use & Adolescent Brain Development. *Youth Studies Australia*, 22(1), p. 39.

[79] White, A. (2003). Substance Use & Adolescent Brain Development. *Youth Studies Australia*, 22(1), p. 40.

[80] Spano, S. (2003). Adolescent Brain Development. *Youth Studies Australia*, 22(1), pp. 36-37.

[81] Phillips, J. (2005). From Neuron to Brainpower: Cognative Neuroscience and Brain-Based Learning. ERIC document # ED490546, pp. 17-18.

[82] National Institute of Mental Health. (2001). Teenage Brain: A Work in Progress, page numbers not available.

The implications of this understanding of the unique qualities of the adolescent brain are many. These new discoveries in neuroscience contribute to understanding of some previously baffling adolescent behaviours. Studies by Deborah Yurgelun-Todd in the United States indicate that adolescents respond in a more emotional or 'gut' manner as compared with adults. She feels this helps explain "understanding differences between adults and teenagers in terms of communication," as well as adolescents propensity for risk-taking behaviours.[85]

In his 1999 presidential proclamation, United States president George Bush declared the 1990s to be the "Decade of the Brain," thus spawning even larger bodies of brain research both in the United States and among the international community.[86] Information on brain development began to surface in the popular media, with *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines devoting theme issues to the subject in the early 21st century. As a result, this information became readily accessible, influencing social understanding of adolescence and becoming a backdrop for a new wave of adolescent parenting material.

This enhanced understanding of the adolescent brain provided a lens through which to re-examine educational theory and practice. Secondary educational environments long focused on lecture and "paper and pencil technology" no longer seemed relevant and shed light on adolescent frustration with their high school experience.[87] The theory of brain-based learning was born, combining neuroscience and psychology with understandings of how adolescent students learn. Proponents of brain-based learning advocate for: providing students with choice, breaking up learning into smaller segments, more project-based learning, and developmentally appropriate activities that stimulate brain.[88]

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[83] Spano, S. (2003). Adolescent Brain Development. *Youth Studies Australia*, 22(1), p. 38.

[84] White, A. (2003). Substance Use & Adolescent Brain Development. *Youth Studies Australia*, 22(1), p. 40.

[85] Yurgelun-Tood, D. (2002). Frontline Interview 'Inside the Teenage Brain" on PBS.org. Page numbers not available.

[86] Phillips, J. (2005). From Neuron to Brainpower: Cognative Neuroscience and Brain-Based Learning. ERIC document # ED490546, p. 5. Of particular interest is a large scale study undertaken by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) in 2002.

[87] Abbott, J. (1997). "Upside Down and Inside Out:" Why Good Schools Alone Will Never be Good Enough to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century. p. 6.

[88] Phillips, J. (2005). From Neuron to Brainpower: Cognitive Neuroscience and Brain-Based Learning. ERIC document # ED490546, p. 18.

Furthermore, brain-based learning strongly advocates that adolescents learn well by 'doing,' thus advocating for an experiential learning approach:

> Recent studies also indicate that the brain seems to exhibit plasticity – and one way this is demonstrated is through 'experiential learning.' This means that the brain has the ability to change as a result of rich experience though active, personal and engaging learning activities.[89]

Research into brain development and brain-based learning remind educators to keep the brain in mind in order to meet the needs of adolescent learners and foster their success.

Boy Learners

Educational and popular literature make frequent references to issues of how males are often less academically successful than their female counterparts. Referred to, at times, as a 'gender gap' in learning, boys tend to have lower scores on standardized test scores, account for more students who drop out of school, and are more likely to be included in special education programs.[90] Although this has been fairly well documented for some time, the debate over male learners has often been focused within a deficit model which associates male interests and behaviours as 'problematic' and boys as 'defective girls.'[91]

However, recent neurological research has revealed that male and female brains differ in more than one hundred structural ways due to genetics and socialization including:

- Verbal/spatial differences resulting in females generally being more verbal than males;
- Optical/neural differences, meaning "boys tend to rely more on pictures and moving objects when they write, whereas girls tend to excel using words that reference color and other fine sensory information;
- Frontal lobe developmental differences resulting in males generally being more impulsive and females being better able to sit still;

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[89] Madrazo, G., & Motz, L. (2005). Brain Research: Implication to Diverse Learners, *Science Educator*, 14(1), p.58.

[90] Marks, G. (2008). Accounting for the Gender Gap in Student Performance in Reading and Mathematics: Evidence from 31 Countries. *Oxford Review of Education*, 43(1), p. 89. and King, K. & Gurian M. (2006). Teaching to the Mind of Boys. *Educational Leadership*, 64(1), p. 56.

[91] Miller, P. (2008). Is you Library Kid-Friendly?. *Library Media Connection*, 26(6), p. 23.

- Neural rest states are more frequent for males, giving the impression of inattention by "drifting off [or] zoning out," as well as in unconscious self-stimulating activities such as tapping their pencils or poking a classmate;

- Communication between brain hemispheres is greater for females, allowing for increased facility in multitasking; and,

- Neural and chemical differences accounting for males being generally more aggressive and competitive than females. Males have less of the bonding chemical oxytocin, believed to lead to higher aggressivity and less of a desire to please others.[92]

Brain research has helped re-shape this debate away from seeing boy learners as 'lacking and slacking:' "...classrooms were generally a better fit for the verbal-emotive, sit-still, takes notes, listen-carefully, multi-tasking girl. Teachers tended to view the natural assets that boys bring to learning – impulsivity, single-task focus, spatial-kinesthetic learning, and physical aggression – as problems."[93] While males need to be engaged in their school and in their learning and be seen through a positive lens of high expectations, educators have identified a number of effective and promising practices to address the particular needs of male learners.

Educators are recognizing the value of physical movement within learning opportunities to address males' tendency toward the spatial and kinesthetic.[94] Allowing for more visual opportunities, such as graphic organizers, storyboards, and graphing may benefit boy learners by decreasing dependence of word-based learning.[95] Furthermore, "boys are better served by balancing multitasking with project-driven and depth-driven learning."[96] Brain-based research further impels educators to embrace males' more competitive side by encouraging a healthy level of competition in the classroom as a way of motivating male learners.

It is also important for schools to consider that males often have different interests. When choosing subjects and reading materials, males prefer more visual materials such as graphic novels. Regarding content, boys tend to gravitate toward "action, minimal character development, humor, grossness, war, fast machines and non-fiction."[97] This should be considered when making material selection and when guiding young males in their own choices of subject. Unfortunately, educators often "do not offer choice in what students read in class."[98]

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[92] King, K. & Gurian, M. (2006). The Brain – His and Hers. *Educational Leadership*, 64(1), p. 59.
[93] Ibid, p. 57.
[94] Sax, L. (2007). The Boy Problem. *School Library Journal*, 53(9), p. 42.
[95] King, K. & Gurian, M. (2006). Teaching to the Minds of Boys. *Educational Leadership*, 64(1), p. 58.
[96] Ibid, p. 59.
[97] Miller, P. (2008), p. 23.
[98] St. Jarre, K. (2008). Don't Blame the Boys: We're Giving Them Girly Books. *English Journal*, 97(2). P. 15.

Issues of organization and engagement of young males can also be supported through after-school homework assistance and tutoring. In addition, this can help overcome the 'gender gap' and provide positive male role models.[99] Interestingly, educators also mention that attention to the needs of male learners need not come at the expense of females, as many male-engaging practices meet the needs of girl learners as well.

5. Minority/Marginalized/Special Populations

History and Impact of Marginalization

Colonization around the world has marginalized groups of people within schools and within the broader society. In addition, colonization has disrupted the transmission of indigenous knowledge systems resulting in a different value system and prioritizing certain ways of knowing over others. Systematic processes of 'othering' (i.e., identifying some people as 'others' leaving them outside, and without access to, the dominant/privileged culture) were imposed, leading to marginalization of certain groups. This has resulted in a disproportionate representation of minority and marginalized people living in poverty, suffering from unemployment, substandard health care, and lack of access to education or other social services. Colonization has negatively impacted indigenous people on a global scale.

> The arrival of the [colonizers] in most parts of the world . . . had far reaching consequences, for they brought with them their own languages, religious beliefs and political systems. They were certain of the superiority of their own knowledge and wisdom, and in most cases imposed it unquestioningly on those they conquered. Hence, they introduced systems of education that were based exclusively on their own processes of knowledge, analysis and transmission. Indigenous knowledge and learning were suppressed, often in quite deliberate and systematic ways. As a consequence, many indigenous groups were marginalized.[100]

Despite arguments that the colonial era is past, the lasting effects are still seen and mirrored in all social institutions, manifesting themselves in schools as "unconscious racial bias, stereotypes, and other race-linked factors [which] have a significant impact on the patterns of identification, placement, and quality of services for minority children."[101] As a result, "...too many schools are plagued by structures like tracking and ability grouping that deny equal opportunity and results to many, particularly the poor, people of color, and women."[102] While there has been debate over de-tracking and its benefits to students,[103] the literature is clear that low income students and students of colour are significantly more likely to be placed in lower academic tracks.[104]

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[99] Martin, D. Martin, M, Semivan Gibson, S. and Wilkins, J. (2007). Increasing Prosocial Behaviour and Academic Achievement Among Adolescent African American Males. *Adolescence*, 42(168), p. 689.

[100] Teasdale, G.R. (1995). Education and Culture: An Introduction. *Prospects*, 25(4), 587-592.

[101] Losen, D.J. & G. Orfield. (2002). *Racial Inequity in Special Education.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, p. xxii.

The literature also abounds with examples of how minority students are misplaced in educational programs. The over-representation of minority students in programs for students with disabilities has been the direct result of "high stakes" testing oftentimes based on discriminatory assumptions of student ability and what constitutes authentic learning. Such assessment methods have also been used to differentiate between students who will be promoted or retained.

The placement of minority students in special education has been well documented. In the United States, studies confirmed that African American males and students speaking English as a second language were over-represented in special education;[105] "African American students were two to three times more likely than whites to be labeled as retarded or behaviorally disturbed."[106] The research suggests that "unconscious racial bias, stereotypes, and other race-linked factors have a significant impact on the patterns of identification, placement and the quality of services for minority children."[107] In the United States, white middle-class children provided the standard against which 'other' children are evaluated. "In this context, poor and minority youth are destined to 'demonstrate' more academic and behavioral problems, which increase their likelihood of being referred for special education."[108] It is not poverty that places minority students at higher risk of special education placement; rather, it is a case of "how structures of opportunity and constraint come to bear on the educational chances of the poor to either expand or constrain their likelihood of achieving competitive educational outcomes."

Such practices have a massive long-term impact on the future opportunities available to young people, including limited post-secondary education opportunities and future employment prospects.

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[102] Beane, JA. & M. W. Apple. (1995). *The Case for Democratic Schools*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Alexandria, VA.

[103] Rubin, Beth C. (2006). Tracking and Detracking: Debates, Evidence, and Best Practices for a Heterogeneous World, *Theory into Practice*, 45(1), 4-14.

[104] Lovelass, Tom (1999). Will Tracking Reform Promote Social Equity? *Educational Leadership*, 56(7), 28-32.

[105] References: D. K. Lipsky, and A. Gartner (1997), *Inclusion and school reform* (Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing); and, M. Wang, and J. Kovach (1996), Bridging the achievement gap in urban schools: Reducing educational segregation and advancing resilience—Promoting strategies in *Closing the achievement gap: A vision for changing beliefs and practices*, ed. B. Williams (Alexandra, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development).

[106] Wang and Kovach (1996).

[107] Ibid.

[108] C. O'Connor, and S. D. Fernandez (2006), Race, class, and disproportionality: Reevaluating the relationship between poverty and special education placement, *Educational Researcher* (25) 6: 6–11.

High Expectations and Other Approaches for Raising Achievement

Identifying the process of 'othering' and its effects on minority and marginalized students is not enough. It is important to actively redress the situation, as seen within the context of education for social justice. Lenore Reilly Carlisle and her colleagues at Mount Holyoke College describe their Social Justice Education framework as "the conscious and reflective blend of content and process intended to enhance equity across multiple social identity groups."[109] They identify principles within Social Justice Education, including promoting inclusion and equity, high expectations for all learners, and direct social justice education and interventions, all within a school or system-wide approach.

It is important for educators to believe in the success of all students:

> The impact of teacher expectation on student achievement is well documented. Copious research demonstrates that students' academic success is directly correlated to social identity-based expectations, and that these effects are cumulative when students embody multiple marginalized identities. Students and teachers alike note a sharp discrepancy in students' access to challenge coursework and basis of social identity.110

Related is the concept of resiliency. Factors that affect resilience are a combination of individual, interpersonal, institutional and community factors. To be resilient young people need to be given resources that that help them cope and be successful in their environment (such as a school). Recent international research suggests that these resources include:

- "Access to material resources like food and clothing;
- Relationships with those who are important to her;
- An identity that is powerful and respected;
- Experiences of control over parts of her life which she should have some say over;
- A sense of her culture, and respect shown by others about what the culture says about her;

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[109] Reilly Carlisle, L., Jackson, B. & George, A. (2006). Principles of Social Justice Education: The Social Justice Education in Schools Project. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 39, p. 57.

[110] Ibid., p. 58.

- Experiences of social justice, meaning that she experiences no prejudice based on her gender, race, ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation or class;
- Social cohesion, the feeling that she is part of something bigger."[111]

In addition to the importance of high expectations for all learners, supplying the necessary resources to learners, and engaging learners through a coherent, thoughtful, and captivating curriculum, Carol Ann Tomlinson underscores the importance of valuing the capabilities of all learners, providing each individual with challenges. Treating students as capable individuals thus moves away from a deficit-based paradigm and the likelihood of pre-determining children's futures based on narrow and erroneous assumptions about race, gender, cultural heritage, and/or ability.

6. Transitions

Transitions occur during the school career of every student, including transitions in and out of the school system, between levels within the system, and between activities and settings. Often these are difficult periods for children and adolescents. For students who need to leave their home community and their family to attend secondary school, the transition challenges are magnified.

Transition into Secondary School

One transition that proves difficult for many students, and is often associated with dips in academic achievement, lowered self-esteem, and increased social anxiety, is the transition into secondary school.[112] Rick Allen describes adolescent school transitions as "having elements of many adolescents' worst social nightmares – not knowing anyone, being ignored by peers, getting lost, and confronting demanding classes and teachers."[113]

Douglas MacIver of Johns Hopkins University suggests that transitions from middle school can be eased by providing:

- Information about the new school and classes via school visits, conferences, and written information. Involving students and families in the planning helps to ensure that information needs are met;

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[111] Unger, M. (2007). The Beginnings of Resilience: A View Across Cultures, *Education Canada*, 47(3), pp. 31-32. Also see the International Resilience Project: www.resilienceproject.org.

[112] Tilleczek, K. (2007/08). Building Bridges: Transitions from Elementary to Secondary School, *Education Canada*, 48(1), p. 68.

[113] Allen, R. (2001), p. 1.

- Social supports for students during transition…'getting to know you stuff' with staff and students;
- Shared information between school staff regarding curriculum and individual students' needs; and,
- Activities long before the first week of school – spring parent orientations, school visits to new school and older student visits to younger school.[114]

Moving from middle to secondary school poses unique challenges as students learn to negotiate a new, larger environment, more teachers, complicated schedules, more homework and the credit system. In the United States, many large secondary schools have gone to the 'academy' approach for students entering secondary school, where teacher teams and scheduling foster stronger bonds between students and staff:

> This continues the middle school concept that learning for young adolescents should be based on team planning, and integrated curriculum and a concern for the habits of mind that promote intelligent thinking over rote learning.[115]

Add to this the fact that the culture of adolescence and the culture of the traditional high school are often at odds: "The culture gap between school and the outside world has grown, therefore the transition between is increasingly challenging, if not impossible, for a sizeable minority of students."[116]

While a recent review of the literature on transition confirmed the issues students face and the effective practices that have been used (e.g. tours, teacher visits, induction days, teacher communication), the author put forth three organizing principles to help understand this transition period: being, belonging, and becoming.[117] Young people need to be themselves and forge their own identities; they are in the state of becoming young adults; and, they need to find their place or their sense of belonging. Furthermore, Tilliczek suggests that factors facilitating transition should be recognized and supported at three levels: macro (cultural); meso (classes, friends, family), and micro (young people and teachers as individuals).

Learners Leaving Home for Secondary School

Practices designed to support secondary school students leaving their home communities are more difficult to find in the literature. Like Yukon, the Government of South Australia has the South Australian Rural Student Accommodation Program which "provides affordable full board, hostel style accommodation for secondary students to live away from home."[118]

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[114] MacIver, D. Page number not available.

[115] Allen, R. (2001), p. 6.

[116] Dixon, D. (n.d.). Transition : are we going anywhere with it?, *teaching expertise*, http://www.teachingexpertise.com/articles/transition-are-we-going-anywhere-with-it-1022

[117] Tilleczek, K. (2007/08), p. 68.

The program was developed after a community consultation in 1999 raised a concern about secondary-aged students who were remaining in the community and not going on to any formal secondary education program. Many were getting into trouble or considered to be 'at risk'. Some had been to secondary schools on the mainland, but had not lasted a whole year. Further community consultation resulted in parents saying that they wanted the students to be immersed in literacy, numeracy and technology, so that they would be better prepared if and when they entered high school. All the other curricular areas were to be integrated into literacy, numeracy and technology.

A group of 20 students who were having academic difficulty were selected for the pilot program. An additional teacher was funded, while the Community Council offered a community worker to act as a teachers' aide in the classroom. As well, parents timetabled themselves so that a particular parent was also present in the classroom every day. Thus, in addition to the non-Indigenous teacher, there were two Indigenous adults in the classroom most of the time. Parents joined in when they felt comfortable and were also able to directly monitor the program in relation to their child's needs. Furthermore, a community elder provided counselling support.

Success factors included a 98% attendance rate, students assuming leadership roles, literacy and numeracy skills increasing, and students feeling prepared to leave for secondary school.

> Perhaps the most important outcome, however, lies in the fact that in August 2001, 17 of the 20 students are attending secondary schools and living away from home. From the point of view of the Badu Island community, it is a considerable success that most of these students might otherwise have been lost to the education system and at further risk to themselves and their community.[119]

While this example speaks to what can be done in a home community to prepare students for the transition, the receiving school and community still have responsibility to address the issues and mechanisms that will support learners before, during, and after their move into secondary school.

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[118] See: http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/portal/community.asp?group=matters&id=27514

[119] See: http://www.whatworks.edu.au/3_3_10.htm

C. Effective and Promising Practices

1. Instruction

Individualization

The vast majority of educational research acknowledges the importance of individualizing the learning experience to meet the needs of all students. As discussed previously, ongoing dialogue with students supports individualization of learning and, in turn, student engagement. As one educator stated, it is only. . .

> as we engage our students in dialogue (that) we learn about their needs, working habits, interests, and talents. We gain important ideas from them about how to build our lessons and plan for their individual progress.[120]

Students will be engaged in such dialogue only when they feel they are having an active role in shaping its outcome. Thus, using an inquiry-based approach[121] to learning nurtures inquiring attitudes or 'habits of mind' which enable individuals to construct their own understandings and create a basis for engaging in dialogue with others.

Students of all talents and abilities can participate in active ways in their education, supported by teachers who understand how to engage them in their learning, even in situations where curriculum needs adaptation or modification. Using personally defined learning experiences, teachers can act as facilitators of a process whereby students are:

> assisted to locate themselves, as well as others, in the social system so as to assess how they and others have been shaped by and in turn shape their social environments, albeit to various degrees and in different directions depending on their social positions.[122]

This approach also supports a new kind of multi-cultural education within an activist framework where students are able "not only to view concepts, and events from diverse perspectives, but also to link their analyses to actions related to injustice, prejudice, and discrimination."[123]

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[120] Noddings, N. (2005). Caring in Education. www.infed.org/biblio/noddings_caring_in_education.htm

[121] See: http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/inquiry/index.html

[122] Hoodfar, H. (1992). Feminist Anthropology and Critical Pedagogy: The Anthropology of Classrooms' Excluded Voices. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 17(3), p. 304.

[123] Shapon-Shevin, Mara. (2001). Schools Fit for All, Educational Leadership, 58(4), 35-36.

The concepts of differentiation and individualization are intertwined. Strategies for differentiation are based on open-ended, problem-solving, or project-based work.[124] More specifically, differentiated instruction may use stations, cooperative learning groups, agendas, orbital studies, entry points and choice boards as instructional strategies. By differentiating instruction and using an array of teaching strategies "teachers not only improve their chances of reaching every learner, but also model respect for diversity and help students understand that people are different and learn differently."[125]

While most educators intuitively understand the logic and importance of differentiation, implementing the concept in the classroom on a day-to-day basis can prove problematic. As stated by Larry Mann, "nearly all teachers believe its better to differentiate instruction, the challenge lies in translating that belief into action."[126] Differentiation, however, does not mean a different program for each student any more than it means creating ability groupings to reduce differences. Rather,

> It means recognizing and accepting that each student is a unique individual. . . . using what you know about learning and about each student to improve your teaching so that students all work in ways that have an optimal effect on their learning.[127]

Assessment can provide a powerful vehicle for differentiation. As noted by Ruth Sutton: "the key to effective differentiation is the accuracy and relevance of the information that we use to decide appropriate learning tasks for pupils, and our willingness to challenge these decisions from time to time by allowing the students to surprise us."[128]

Experiential Learning

All genuine education comes through experience.
- John Dewey

Experiential Learning is participative. It takes place in purposefully constructed settings, whereby learners engage in structured experiences, combined with meaningful reflection, as a way to maximize learning. These structured experiences might include classroom "solution-finding" activities, outdoor activities, adventure-based opportunities, the performing arts, and service learning.[129] Based on the work of Dewey, Freire, and Kolb, among others, Experiential Learning is suited to the acquisition of practical skills through the opportunity to practise techniques related to real tasks.

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[124] Tomlinson, Carol Ann. (1999). Deciding to Teach Them All, *Educational Leadership*, 61(2), 7-11.

[125] Shapon-Shevin, M. (2001), p.36.

[126] Mann, Larry (2000), p. 2.

[127] Earl, Lorna M. (2003). *Assessment As Learning: Using Classroom Assessment to Maximize Student Learning*. Corwin Press, Inc.: Thousand Oaks, CA. p. 87.

[128] Sutton, Ruth (1995). Assessment for learning. Salford, UK: RS Publications, p. 26.

[129] Imaginative Learning, as developed at Simon Fraser University and piloted through the Learning through Understanding Through Culturally Inclusive Imaginative Development (LUCID), with be discussed under the section on Effective and Promising Practices for First Nations Students.

> The experiences are integrated with facilitated reflective processes that help learners explore what happened during the experience, analyze the patterns that emerged, strategize for the next experience and transfer learning to another environment (work, home, school, etc.).[130]

In Yukon programs, such as ACES 10 and Experiential Sciences 11 and Plein Air et Science Experientielles 9, use out of the classroom, real world situations to enrich the lives of learners through the development of a deep appreciation for the Earth. MAD allows students to immerse themselves in the performing arts, while the Feast Program gives students the experience of a commercial kitchen. Generally speaking, well-constructed technical vocational learning opportunities may also fall under the umbrella of experiential learning. Therefore, experiential learning, while engaging students and connecting them to their world, helps them develop leadership skills and self-esteem, encourages cooperation and team-building, and fosters risk-taking, reflection and the exploration of values.

The effectiveness of Experiential Learning has been studied in pockets, although its premise is supported by the research on the importance of student engagement and the need for authentic learning experiences.[131] One study of girls in a wilderness program demonstrated that the program helped adolescent girls challenge conventional notions of femininity. Girls reported drawing on the experience when faced with other challenging circumstances in their lives. For some, they improved academically, while for others, they developed skills in relationship and ally building. The experience helped girls "look beyond traditional roles and see themselves as capacity in a variety of nontraditional occupations."[132]

Outdoor adventure programs for people with disabilities also suggest positive effects including the prospect for members of diverse groups to find their commonalities in "an atmosphere where differences are honoured and embraced as opportunities to learn about others and ourselves."[133]

Another Canadian example grew out of notion that students may learn science "if they are given opportunities to participate in collectively motivated activities that others in their community already pursue, such as gardening, hatching salmon or stream stewardship."[134] The Hagan Creek-Kennes Watershed Stewardship Project (operating in Central Saanich, B.C.) has a goal of stewardship and watershed restoration. This Project linked with schools, engaging scientists, First Nations elders, environmental activists, graduate students, parents and other community residents. After learning about the Project, students volunteered to clean up the creek and examine various elements. After environmentalists introduced students to tools and techniques, students designed and conducted their own investigations which they later reported on to community.

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[130] Ricketts, M. & Willis, J. (2002). The Power of Experiential Learning. http://www.teambuildingguru.com/Desktopdefault.aspx?tabID=424

[131] Proponents of experiential education, such as Karla Henderson (2004), cite the importance of conducting more 'evidence-based' research in the field.

[132] Whittington, Anja. (2006). Girls in the Woods: Exploring the Impact of a Wilderness Program on Adolescent Girls' Construction of Femininity, *Journal of Experiential Education*, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3907/is_200601/ai_n17184203

[133] Sugerman, Deborah. (2001). Inclusive outdoor education: Facilitating groups that include people with disabilities, *Journal of Experiential Education*, http://findaticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3907/is_200101/ai_n8952065

> Because students were free to choose what they wanted to research, which tools and instruments they wanted to use, and how they wanted to report their research, they had control over the process and a personal identification with the products of their labour.[135]

Furthermore:

> Learning science by contributing to society likely has a double benefit: children learn in a meaningful way, contribute to societal needs, and develop the kinds of orientations future generations will need to make the survival of the human species possible.[136]

Similarly, service learning is another form of experiential learning in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs through community-based service that links with academic goals and critical reflection. In a study of grade 9 students, the students demonstrated positive personal development as well as a stronger sense of civic and social responsibility. "The results . . . support the hypothesis that community service, including service-learning, can make a positive and valuable contribution to the cognitive, affective, civic and social development of youth."[137]

> *First Nations people traditionally adopted a holistic approach to education. Principles of spiritual, physical, and emotional growth, as well as economic and physical survival skills, were developed in each individual to ensure eventual family and village survival. Certain learning specialties in these areas were emphasized, including independence, self-reliance, observation, discovery, empirical practicality, and respect for nature.*
>
> - J. Archibald (1995), as cited by E. Antone in *Education Canada* (2003).

Experiential learning dovetails with brain-based learning and new understandings of adolescent brain development by incorporating a philosophy of 'learning by doing." Experiential learning invites "teenagers [to be] empowered with opportunities to develop their brains through activities in which they choose to actively participate."[138]

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[134] Roth, Wolff-Michael. (2007). Moving Science Classes to the Community: A Question of Social Justice, *Education Canada*, 47(2), p. 46.

[135] Ibid., p. 48.

[136] Ibid., p. 49.

[137] Waldstein, Fredric A. (2001). Service-learning and students' personal and civic development, *Journal of Experiential Education*, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3907/is_200104/ai_n8952831

[138] Spano, S. (2003). Adolescent Brain Development, *Youth Studies Australia*, 22(1), p.38.

As one component of experiential learning is critical reflection, the need for students to engage in self-assessment is obvious. In addition, authentic community-oriented tasks involved in experiential learning point to the application of authentic assessment practices and a focus on assessment for and assessment as learning as discussed in a later section.

Effective and Promising Practices for First Nations Students[139]

This section attempts to reference, build on, and reinforce, information found in other sections of the literature review and in Yukon documents such as Students Succeeding and Accomplishing Their Dreams (2007) and the Education Reform Project*: Final Report* (2007).

Of the approximately 5000 students enrolled in Yukon schools, First Nations students represent approximately one-third of students overall and one quarter of Whitehorse students. *Students Succeeding and Accomplishing Their Dreams* articulates a vision for teaching and learning where "Yukon First Nations culture, history and language is woven into programs and delivered at school, in the community and on the land. Culture and curriculum are woven together."[140]

The vision also includes more fluency in First Nations languages and "the opportunity to explore creative, imaginative learning," and the use of experiential programs.[141] Children are valued and respected as individuals, while parents, families, elders and community are integral parts in their children's education. The goal "Curriculum Development, Implementation and Evaluation" reiterates this sentiment, while it speaks directly to the critical importance of incorporating "First Nations content, perspectives, and ways of teaching into a public school education that is focused on achievement."[142]

The vision articulates elements of what are effective and promising practices for First Nations students; many of which are effective for all students. The issue of culture is central and must be understood as:

> a complex and dynamic phenomenon rather than a narrowly defined, static set of traditional beliefs and practices . . . . Culture and language will remain superficial and disconnected if it is not based on a complete understanding of how Indigenous knowledge

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[139] There is also a body of literature that speaks to the importance of, and strategies for, Aboriginal education for all students.

[140] Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee, (2007). *Yukon First Nations Education Kindergarten to Grade 12: Students Succeeding and Accomplishing Their Dreams*, p. 10.

[141] Ibid., p. 11.

[142] Ibid., p. 17.

> is deeply rooted in people's lives and consciousness. It is essential, as well, to take into account the diversity of indigenous cultures and experiences.[143]

The importance of incorporating both language and culture cannot be overemphasized: "Language training is fundamental to personal empowerment through cultural education."[144] The situation in Yukon where indigenous languages are in danger of extinction is addressed in some part through some language programming and the work of the Yukon Native Language Centre, but as noted in the Education Reform Project: Final Report, "despite these initiatives . . . aboriginal languages continue to struggle for time and resources in the public school system and Yukon First Nations communities."[145]

In Yukon, the FirstVoices initiative is supported by the Yukon Government's Aboriginal Language Services to provide technology to the Tagish, Southern Tutchone, and Han language communities. Teams of Elders and young people are using technology to document their languages and create language resources, in addition to the development of FirstVoices language archives.[146]

Language programs exist in other northern jurisdictions, such as the Lower Kuskokwim (Alaska) School District's (LKSD) bilingual programs. In some communities children come to school speaking their indigenous language, many communities have the Yup'ik First Language program. However, other communities where English was gaining prominence have chosen a Bilingual/Bicultural program, while other villages are implementing two-way immersion programs.[147] However, one of the challenges, particularly evident at the secondary level, was that the 'school' was still not grounded in a Yup'ik world view with the cultural component as 'add-ons,' such as heritage weeks and dance festivals. Hence, the need to develop a culturally-based curriculum framework was identified. Despite these challenges, LKSD has increased participation of community members, many more Yup'ik language materials, and an increasing number of Yup'ik certified staff. The University of Alaska – Fairbanks supports Yup'ik language proficiency through their College of Liberal Arts, Department of Alaska Native Languages.

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[143] Wotherspoon, T. & Schissel, B. (1998). *Decolonization and Voice: Prospects for Aboriginal Education in Canada*, Discussion Paper, Pan-Canadian Education Research Agenda, prepared for Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, p. 3

[144] Ibid., p. 9.

[145] Executive Committee of the Education Reform Project. (2007). *Education Reform Project: Final Report*, 2.3.

[146] http://firstvoices.com/scripts/WebObjects.exe/FirstVoices.woa/wa/file/index-Canada-north.html

[147] Williams, B., Gross, K. & Magoon, D. (1996). Lower Kuskokwim Bilingual Programs, *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages*, (ed.) Cantoni, G., see : http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/stabilize/additional/kuskokwim.htm

The Yup'ik people created programs that relied heavily on outdoor experiences "explained as the way Yup'ik have traditionally transmitted their knowledge."[148] The school program based on subsistence activities, which embedded the cultural, historical and geographic context, contributed "to the development of deep relationships among students and their environment, which enhanced the perception of their beings as Yup'ik."[149] Furthermore, students' academic performance improved, perhaps explained by factors such as an interesting and relevant curriculum, improved relationships between community and the school, and improved relationships between students and teachers.

Experiential learning was previously discussed in a broader context, but is particularly relevant to First Nations students and communities as noted in the example above. In the First Nations context, learning is explained as a whole, experiential process connected to community, people and nature.

> [Education] is a value-laden process using experience, storytelling, ritual and ceremony, dreaming, tutoring, and artistic creation. At its heart, indigenous education is a spiritual endeavour.[150]

Cajete, in his book *Igniting the Sparkle*, presents a curriculum that integrates Native American traditional values, teaching principles and concepts of nature with those of Western science.[151] The importance of connection to the natural environment, more specifically, the use of land-based curriculum has been implemented in other First Nations communities. For example, the Dene community of Lac La Martre extended the classroom to the land with instruction by both elders and formal teachers. However, "constant elder-youth contact is envisioned as a fundamental education vehicle and the Dogrib language is the framework around such education is built."[152]

Curiosity and imagination are other concepts inextricably linked with land and tradition. As stated by Blackstock:

> Our ancestors valued curiosity and the search for answers that is so endemic to being human. But as much as they encouraged us to ask questions, they also taught us to think through which

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[148] Takako, T. (2006). Building a Bond With the Natural Environment Through Experiential Engagement: A Case Study of Land-Based Education Curriculum in Rural Alaska, *Journal of Experiential Education*, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3907/is_200601/ai_n17184204

[149] Ibid.

[150] G. Cajete, as referenced by Spicer, C. (n.d.). Carrying on Despite the Violent Twentieth Century: A Tenacious History of People's Education, *Creating Learning Communities*; http://www.creatinglearningcommunities.org/book/roots/spicer.html

[151] Cajete, G. (1999). *Igniting the Sparkle: An Indigenous Science Education Model.* Skyland, NC: Kivaki Press.

[152] Wotherspoon, T. & Schissel, B. (1998), p. 13.

> questions we should not answer. Too often, arriving at an answer stopped the journey for truth . . . . They knew that if we found "the truth" we would not be open to other possible truths – and most of all, I think they knew that true wisdom was found in exploring the interconnections between all forms of life, the environment and locating this understanding in a continuum of time that spanned millennia.[153]

Another Canadian example of using experiential learning and curiosity is the "Learning for Understanding through Culturally Inclusive Imaginative Development" (LUCID). The project brings together academic researchers (Simon Fraser University) and school district-First Nations partnerships in three regions of British Columbia. The project "enables the flexible and meaningful incorporation of First Nations cultural knowledge and practices in ways that enrich rather than conflict with standard academic objectives;" it challenges teachers to "locate wonder" to link with children's understanding of the world.[154] The project is ongoing and represents an example of 'promising,' rather than 'validated' practice.

Finally, mirroring what is known about the importance of student engagement, teachers and administrators who are most successful in working with Aboriginal students and communities are:

> those who maintain active engagement with their learners and learning contexts. . . . [who have] continual sensitivity to cultural and social factors . . . [and who have] open and caring relations with students, and the ability to serve as facilitator and counsellor rather than purely an instructor.[155]

However, experience in Canada in creating an inclusive environment that is respectful of Aboriginal learners has been "highly uneven, often revealing tremendous variations from school to school and teacher to teacher."[156] In successful instances linkages are forged among supportive learning environments, healthy communities and innovative social and economic development initiatives, while the worst case scenarios are "characterized by serious divisions between school staff and parents and an absence of trust and mutual engagement."[157]

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[153] Blackstock, C. (2007). If Reindeer Could Fly: Dreams and Real Solutions for Aboriginal Children, *Education Canada*, 47 (1), p. 5.

[154] Fettes, M. (2005). *Imaginative Engagement in Culturally Diverse Classrooms: Changing Teacher Thinking and Practice within a Community-University Research Alliance*, paper presented at the CSSE Conference, pp. 3-5.

[155] Wotherspoon, T. & Schissel, B. (1998). p. 6.

[156] Wotherspoon, T. (2007). Teaching for Equity: What teachers say about their work in Aboriginal communities, *Education Canada*, 47(4), p. 65.

[157] Ibid.

Effective and Promising Practices for English as an Additional Language Learners (EAL/ESL)

An increasing number of Canadian students do not have English or French as their first language. While some of these students come from families that have been living in Canada for some time, such as First Nations students, many come from families who are newly arrived in this country. The focus of this section of the literature review will be on secondary school English language learners who have recently arrived in Canada.

Information from Statistics Canada documents increasing waves of immigration into Canada. EAL learners face a number of unique challenges. Interestingly, recently published information from Statistics Canada indicates that 'learning the official language' was the second most-frequently cited difficulty of immigrants' first four years in Canada.'[158]

Students from various countries may not only face language challenges when they arrive in Canada, but also face significant cultural and social changes as well:

> Although an ELL[159] student may have attended school in other countries, those schools might have had very different rules and expectations. While an ELL student is likely eager to please educators, he may not understand what is expected of him in his new environment.[160]

As a result, educators working with students learning English struggle with a number of questions including, for example, how to assess students with limited English and how to help students who may have limited familiarity with formal schooling. EAL teachers also wrestle with how to teach English literary with those with limited vocabulary.[161]

However, educational literature also highlights ways of supporting those learning English as an Additional Language. Betsy Lewis-Moreno's 2007 article in Phi Delta Kappan reminds educators that "...students who arrive from other cultures with other languages should be viewed as assets rather than liabilities."[162] It is also important to note that services to support EAL learners must be integrated and are shared by all the school's educators rather than viewed as a situation 'to be remedied' by a special EAL educator. This becomes of particular importance in the secondary school setting where specific vocabulary and content need to be provided in harmony with language acquisition.[163]

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[158] Schellenberg, G. & Maheux, H. (2007). Immigrants' Perspectives of Their First Four Years in Canada: Highlights from Three Waves of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada. *Canadian Social Trends*, Special Education, April 2007, p. 9.

[159] In the United States, English as an Additional Language Learners are most frequently referred to as English Language Learners (ELL).

[160] York, S. (2008). Culturally Speaking: English Language Learners. *Library Media Connection*, 25(7) p. 27.

[161] Wallace, C. (2008). Vocabulary: The Key to Teaching English Language Learners to Read. *Education Digest*, May 2008, p. 36.

[162] Lewis-Moreno, B. (2007). Shared Responsibility: Achieving Success with English-Language Learners. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(10), p. 772.

Finally, literature emphasizes that educators must not see EAL learners though a single lens, but as a heterogeneous group with widely divergent educational needs that should be addressed "using a full range of auditory, visual, and kinesthetic strategies – activity shifting, instructional intelligence, multiple intelligences, and an array of diverse teaching approaches that tap into the best brain-compatible learning and provide innovative ways to reach students."[164]

2. Assessment

As mentioned previously, a student-centered school fosters caring relationships between teachers and students, highlights connections between individual students and curricular content, and incorporates student voice into curricular activities. However, it is equally as important for students to have a say in how they are asked to demonstrate what they have learned. The numerous ways in which students learn has been thoroughly documented and has been used to argue for the importance of differentiated instruction. This same logic applies to assessment practices; they must be developmentally, culturally, and age appropriate, tailored to the strengths and experiences of each learner.

> *. . . it is not just the content and language of assessment that need to be considered to make assessment culturally appropriate for students but also the process surrounding the assessment itself.*
>
> - Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull (2008).

Research outlines the inappropriateness of uniform standards of student achievement: "the standards movement has already shown that imposing a single set of expectations on young adults may modestly improve test scores, yet fail to engage students."[165] This relates to the phenomenon of high school graduates in the United States who look back on their secondary education with dissatisfaction because they feel their experiences did not adequately prepare them for life beyond high school. If they had the opportunity to do high school over again they would take more difficult and challenging courses.[166] (This same result has been documented in numerous graduate follow-up surveys conducted in Manitoba.) While often in high school students could excel through memorization, this strategy has limited application in life beyond secondary school. The necessity of engaging learners through changing instruction and assessment practices is becoming more and more accepted. The link between assessment and instruction cannot be over-stated.

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[163] Ibid, p. 773.

[164] Lombardi, J. (2008). Beyond Learning Styles: Brain-Based Research and English Language Learners. *The Clearing House*, 81(5), p. 219.

[165] Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory At Brown University. (2001). *Student-Centered High Schools*. Brown University: Providence, RI.

[166] Peter D. Hart Research Associations/Public Opinion Strategies, 2005, as quoted in: Levine, M. (2007). The Essential Cognitive Backpack, Educational Leadership, 64(7), p. 17.

Current literature on assessment categorizes assessment into three domains: assessment **of** learning, assessment **for** learning, and assessment **as** learning. Historically, assessment **of** learning has been predominate; its purpose is summative and is intended "to certify learning and report to parents and students about students' progress in school, usually by signaling students' relative position compared to other students."[167] In comparison, assessment **for** learning is formative. Teachers remain the central players but they use their personal knowledge and their understanding of the assessment context and curriculum to identify learner needs, provide feedback to students, and help to scaffold the next steps for learning. Assessment **as** learning extends the role of formative assessment by emphasizing the role of the learners who act as connector between the assessment and the learning process.

"What is learned from caring teachers willing to share their knowledge and their pleasure in learning is often incidental and very powerful precisely because it is given freely. We live in an age that concentrates too narrowly on the specification of what must be learned and on testing to be sure that it has indeed been learned."

Noddings, N. (2005). *Caring in Education.* www.infed.org/biblio/noddings_caring_in_education.htm

> Students, as active, engaged and critical assessors, can make sense of information, relate it to prior knowledge, and master the skills involved. This is the regulatory process in metacognition. It occurs when students personally monitor what they are learning and use the feedback from this monitoring to make adjustments, adaptations, and even major changes in what they understand. Assessment *as* Learning is the ultimate goal, where students are their own best assessors.[168]

The Hagan Creek Project (previously discussed) is an example of students engaged in an authentic task where students demonstrated the results of their work – and their learning - in authentic ways. They presented at yearly community open houses using posters and engaging adults and other children in dialogue about their findings. Subsequently, students' work was published in the local newspaper and on the website of the environmental activists. These were key activities as "students' work came to be legitimated and legitimate . . . . To the children the science units were successful not because they received high grades, but because the unit was useful and contributed to community life."[169] This is not only a case of assessment as learning where students were their own best assessors, but also an instance where both the process and products of students' learning made an authentic and valuable contribution to their community.

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[167] Earl, Lorna M. (2003), p. 22.
[168] Ibid., p. 25.
[169] Ibid., p. 48.

3. Distinct Schools and Education Systems

Aboriginal and First Nations

First Nations people have both a constitutional and a treaty right to education.

> Although Canada and First Nations entered into an educational partnership through the treaties, quality educational services for First Nations students and equitable educational programming with that provided in provincial schools has not evolved.[170]

Wotherspoon and Schissel cite numerous authors whose work supports the fact that the strongest benefits are realized in provincial, territorial and First Nations schools "when Aboriginal culture is incorporated holistically or integrated through all aspects of programming and school culture."[171]

Distinct Aboriginal schools exist in First Nations communities. A few have been established within public education systems, although these are most frequent at the elementary/middle school level. Canadian secondary schools include Children of the Earth (The Winnipeg School Division, Manitoba) and Amiskwaciy Academy (Edmonton Public Schools, Alberta).

> Amiskwaciy Academy is committed to helping students achieve academic excellence in all disciplines and to providing students with the advice, assistance and support they need to realize their own potential. Our academic program is based on an equal mix of knowledge, skills and values across all subjects. Using the Alberta Program of Studies as a base, the Academy enriches the curriculum by offering options courses that reflect Aboriginal traditions and values. The Academy also structures the school year into four terms that reflect the four seasons; an approach that echoes the Aboriginal tradition that certain things are best learnt at certain times of the year.[172]

> Children of the Earth is a unique educational setting in which our students are given the opportunity to gain knowledge of and experience Aboriginality in their daily educational lives. In all academic areas aboriginal perspectives are incorporated into current Manitoba curricula, enriching it and making its outcomes more meaningful to our students. . . . A wide range of cultural

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[170] Stewart, Sheila Carr (2006). First Nations Education: Financial Accountability and Educational Attainment. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 29(4), p.1002.

[171] Wotherspoon and Schissel (1998), p. 6.

[172] See: http://amiskwaciy.epsb.net/courses/courses.html

> activities are offered on a daily, weekly and monthly schedule allowing our students hands on experiences with the culture and traditions from our collective histories and to explore contemporary issues and topics important to their development as the future leaders of our nation and people.[173]

Children of the Earth High School is committed to the preservation of heritage languages; it is the only non-immersion high school in Manitoba with language requirements for graduation. Cree and Ojibwe are part of the high school curriculum from grades 9 to 12.[174] Second language methodology is the basis of instruction within a culturally based pedagogy. Certain goals and outcomes from the Common Curriculum Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Cultural Programs are applied to the instructional program.

Many public schools in Canada attempt to integrate Aboriginal perspectives into curriculum to varying degrees. However, the integration of language, culture, tradition, and effective pedagogy represents a challenge, particularly for mainstream public secondary schools.

Faith-Based

While a considerable volume of literature exists around topics of faith-based education, and indeed regarding Catholic education in particular, much of this research does not focus on effective or promising practices. However, the few sources that focus on effective and promising practices in faith-based education highlight factors of student engagement (outlined in section 2c of this document). Janine Bempechat at al's recent examination of students' achievement beliefs in two Catholic high schools revealed these students "perceived their schools as caring environments in which teachers take a deep interest in both their academic and psychological well-being."[175]

Interestingly, the importance of a caring environment to student achievement and well-being is echoed by Jasmin Zine in her examination of Islamic schooling in Canada. Zine stresses the importance of a 'safe' environment within Islamic schools, meaning a place were students feel 'safe' to express and be who they are.[176] Like Nel Noddings and Deborah Meier, these authors emphasize the importance of a positive school climate in fostering student success, and illustrate how this is focused within a faith-based environment.

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[173] See: http://www.wsd1.org/cote/admin.html

[174] Children of the Earth (Winnipeg School Division) was rated as one of Canada's top ten schools by Maclean's magazine: http://www.wsd1.org/cote/welcome.html

[175] Bempechat, J., Boulay, B., Peirgross, S. & Wenk, S. (2008). Beyond the Rhetoric: Understanding Achievement and Motivation in Catholic School Students. *Education and Urban Society*, 40(2), p. 167.

[176] Zine, J. (2007). Safe Havens or Religious 'Ghettos'? Narratives of Islamic Schools in Canada. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 10(1), p. 71.

Students must understand the relevance of their studies in order to be engaged in their learning. This is also true for students within faith-based schools, and is particularly important in light of globalization. Schools are reminded to "prepare students for their encounter with cultural and religious 'others'."[177] Faith-based schools have a role to play through their examination of global religions within course content.

Furthermore, recent public debate around public funding of faith-based education has sparked many articles in both the Canadian and American media. As a result, much recent educational literature focuses on issues of funding for faith-based school, as well as examinations of school independence versus state control. Within peer-reviewed educational literature, this issue has also produced a body of research that debates the traditional view that liberal democratic social views and faith-based education are at odds.

In the Canadian context, Francis Kroeker and Stephen Norris point out that "religious schools have a legitimate place in the liberal democratic state. . . [since these institutions] need not result in isolation or intolerance or undermine children's future autonomy."[178] These authors contend there is undue fear in liberal democracies that faith-based schooling leads to segregation and the development of intolerance. In fact, John Hiemstra and Robert Brink take this one step further by suggesting an educational system that accommodates faith-based school encourages pluralism by "no longer . . . require[ing] the provincial school system to assimilate children into a single official religion or public ideology."[179]

Therefore, it appears that effective and promising practices within faith-based education are similar to those for all students and focus around the importance of student engagement. The emphasis on caring and acceptance within Catholic systems, and as in other faith-based environments, is critical to fostering student success.

Minority Language

Francophone education in minority environments in Canada has long been in existence, even pre-dating the federal government's official bilingualism program in 1970.[180] However, the 1982 enactment of the Canadian Charter of Rights and

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[177] Miedema, S. & Bertram-Troost, G. (2008). Democratic Citizenship and Religious Education: Challenges and Perspectives for Schools in the Netherlands. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 30(2), p. 123.

[178] Kroeker, F. & Norris, S. (2007). An Unwarranted Fear of Religious Schooling. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 30(1), p. 288.

[179] Hiemstra, J. & Brink, R. (2006). The Advent of Public Pluriformity Model: Faith-Based School Choice in Alberta. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 29(4), p. 1163.

[180] Nevertheless, there have also been periods when French education was banned in various Canadian jurisdictions prior to 1970. There are a number of references in the literature to the history of Francophone minority language education in Canada, such as Matthew Hayday's article entitled

Freedoms included Section 23 which guarantees French or English speaking Canadians in minority environments the right to primary and secondary education in their mother tongue where sufficient numbers warrant.[181]

This legal context clarifies issues for the provision of Francophone education in minority environments, such as Yukon or Whitehorse in particular. First, this highlights the issue of equity in minority language education, both in terms of access and program provision. In addition, the Supreme Court of Canada has provided a number of decisions based on Section 23 which have provided further clarification around minority language education. For example, *Arsenault-Cameron v. Prince Edward Island* (2000) confirmed that Section 23 provided "the official language minority with equal access to high quality education in its own language in circumstances where community development is enhanced."[182]

Not only does this highlight the importance of equity and access to quality education, it further confirms the importance of community involvement in minority language education. Also, the Supreme Court has further interpreted Section 23 by confirming "that language rights cannot be separated from a concern for the culture associated with the language, and that the constitutional provision was meant to correct, on a national scale, the historically progressive erosion of the two official language groups."[183]

This also draws attention to the essential link between language and culture. Furthermore, it calls on policy makers to consider that minority language education takes place within a context of linguistic and cultural continuation and preservation, and also makes clear that preservation is best suited within a separate minority language educational milieu.

This context sheds light on effective and promising practices for Francophone minority education in Yukon by highlighting the importance of equity, quality, community involvement, the link between language and culture, and the importance of linguistic and cultural continuation and preservation, similar to what might be argued in terms of First Nations education. In addition, the issues brought to light in section on student engagement also apply to students in minority language education settings.

"Confusing and Conflicting Agendas: Federalism, Official Languages and the Development of the Bilingual Education in Ontario, 1970-1983" (*Journal of Canadian Studies*, 36(1), pp. 50-78.

[181] The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is available at http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/, with Section 23 available at http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/#langues.

[182] Khan, A. & Van Der Waarden, N. (2001). Recent Development in Canadian Constitutional Law Relating to Children and Education. *Education and the Law*, 13(4), p. 367.

[183] Ibid., p. 366.

Immersion

French immersion programs in Canada have a long history, dating back to the mid-1960's in Quebec. This has resulted in a considerable body of literature on French immersion programming, much of it centring on the program's impact on language acquisition, academic, and cognitive outcomes for students. In addition, research and literature from the United States focuses on bilingual programming in that country, although the context, purpose, and organization of these programs differ considerably from Canadian French immersion.[184]

French immersion is available in all Canadian jurisdictions. Intended for students' whose first language is not French, the goal of French immersion programming is additive bilingualism, where students have the opportunity to gain fluency in a second language without putting their first language in jeopardy.

French immersion programming differs in terms of age of first immersion instruction and intensity of instruction in the second language. The first refers to when students begin their immersion instruction, either early immersion beginning in Kindergarten or Grade 1, or late immersion which does not usually begin until middle years. Intensity of instruction refers to the amount of time students spend studying in French, ranging from 50 to 100 percent, depending on the age of the child and the type of programming. Immersion settings, either in exclusively French immersion schools (milieu schools) or in dual-track English and French immersion schools, may also affect the intensity of French instruction, as the language of operation of milieu schools is French and allows for more opportunities for French instruction.[185]

Participation in French immersion programming across the country increased steadily through the 1970's and 1980's, reaching a plateau of approximately seven to eight percent of eligible students.[186] However, French immersion enrolment has increased in more recent years, and has seen moderate growth since 2001. As might be expected, considerable research into French immersion stems for the 1970's and 1980's, however, recent increases in enrolment have prompted a re-examination of the research.

Recent literature confirms earlier research claims that students in French immersion programming generally benefit from second language acquisition:

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[184] Genesee, F. & P. Gandara. (1999). Bilingual Education Programs: A Cross-National Perspective. *Journal of Social Issues*, 55(4), pp 665-685.

[185] A number of sources reference the types of French immersion programming in Canada including information from organizations such as Canadian Parents for French at http://www.cpf.ca/ and the Canadian Council on Learning at http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl.

[186] Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). *Lessons in Learning: French-Immersion Education in Canada*, p. 5.

> A survey of French second language (FSL) education in Canada suggests that French Immersion students enjoy significant linguistic, academic, and cognitive benefits. ...French Immersion programs enable students to develop high levels of proficiency in both French and English, at no cost to their academic success.[187]

Statistics Canada compared "the reading achievement of Canadian 15-year-olds enrolled in immersion and non-immersion English-language school systems" on the Program of International Student Assessment (PISA).[188] This examination concluded that French immersion students out-perform non-immersion students.

While the literature suggests French immersion students attain significant levels of fluency in French, this is more pronounced in the area of receptive language. Citing the previous work of Genesee and Cummins, Lazaruk recently concluded, "...early French immersion student typically approach native-like levels in French listening comprehension and reading skills by the end of elementary school, but are nonetheless easy to distinguish from comparable native speakers in the speaking and writing skills."[189] Research dating back to the early 1960's suggests links between bilingualism and cognitive advantages. More recently, "Baker (2000) identifies a heightened 'elasticity in thinking' among bilinguals, which he associates with having access to two or more words for an object or idea."[190] In addition, the enhanced metalinguistic awareness of bilinguals was been associated with flexibility and creative thinking. However, it is important to note these findings are based on learners acquiring significant language skills in both their native and second language, hence the term 'bilinguals.' In fact, this led Cummings to postulate "bilingual children must achieve a certain level of linguistic competence if they are to avoid cognitive deficits and enjoy bilingualism's beneficial influence on cognitive growth."[191]

Genesee, Cummins, and Lazaruk's findings have been used to argue for the importance of intense French immersion programming, both in terms of instructional time and setting. They argue that increased instructional time in French and a school setting which includes only French immersion students will help students' language production and help ensure more complete bilingualism. In addition, the Canadian Council on Learning states "attrition rates tend to be lower in self-contained French-immersion schools, suggesting French environments are better for student than dual-track school where English is also spoken."[192]

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[187] Lazaruk, W. (2007). Linguistic, Academic, and Cognitive Benefits of French Immersion. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 63(5) p. 605.

[188] Allen, M. (2004). Does French Immersion Improve Reading Achievement? *Canadian Social Trends*, 74, p. 7.

[189] Lazaruk (2007), p. 611.

[190] Lazaruk (2007), p. 623.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Canadian Council on Learning. (2007). *Lessons in Learning: French-Immersion Education in Canada*, p. 6.

While traditionally intended for students whose first language is English, recent shifts in Canadian demographics have prompted new research into whether French immersion is appropriate for students whose first language is other than English. A review of the literature on this subject commissioned by Canadian Parents for French (appearing in the Canadian Modern Languages Review) suggests Allophone students can indeed be successful in French Second Language programming.[193]

4. Connecting with Parents and Community Resources

Engaging Parents and Parental Support

As stated by the Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee, "parental involvement is critical and central to a child's education wherever that education occurs."[194] Indeed, the educational literature is full of documentation regarding the importance of parental contributions to their children's education.

In an extensive literature review on the impact of parental involvement and support, Desforges and Abouchaar make a distinction between studies on "spontaneous parental involvement," as distinct from on interventions to enhance parental involvement.[195] Studies on spontaneous parental involvement point to a range of activities that promote children's educational progress, including activities at school (visits to discuss issues, participation in school events) and activities at home (modeling constructive social and educational aspirations and values).[196] However, the authors also note that the nature and impact of these forms of parental involvement are related to certain family characteristics (e.g., level of mother's education), although the scale of impact is evident across all social classes and all ethnic groups studied: "Research consistently shows that what parents do with their children at home is far more important to their achievement than their social class or level of education."[197] Impact of parental involvement, however, tends to diminish as children get older. Also, the impact is strongly influenced by the child because young people play an active role in mediating between parents and schools.

Much effort has been expended by educators in trying to enhance home-school links. Comprehensive efforts to engage parents sometimes have to deal with many issues, ranging from the effects of extreme poverty, the impact of substance abuse, and lack of parental confidence, to the barriers set up by the schools themselves.

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[193] Mady, C. (2007). Allophone Students in French-Second-Language Programs: A Literature Review. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 63(5) 727-760.

[194] Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee, (2007). *Yukon First Nations Education Kindergarten to Grade 12: Students Succeeding and Accomplishing Their Dreams* (Draft), p. 18.

[195] Desforges, C. & Abouchaar, A. (2003). *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment: A Literature Review*, Department for Education and Skills, Research Report RR433. Available at: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR433.pdf

[196] Ibid., p. 85.

[197] Ibid., p. 87.

> . . . there are many programmes and interventions working, to the evident satisfaction of participants, to alleviate some of the above difficulties. Yet there is a consistent lack of evidence showing the delivery of the 'achievement bonus.' The link between getting parents in a position to be pro-schooling and getting children to make quantum leaps in achievement seems to be missing.[198]

The work of Epstein and her colleagues has shown that a whole school community strategic approach to involve parents has more chance for success and can improve schools, strengthen families, stimulate community support, and increase student achievement. Epstein promotes 'school learning community' that "includes educators, students, parents and community partners who work together to improve the school and enhance students' learning opportunities."[199] She advocates for a partnership program that starts with an Action Team for Partnerships, linked to the school council or school improvement team. With a focus on student success, the team writes a plan for family and community involvement, implements and evaluates the activities, and connects with activities of other groups and individual teachers. The plan addresses six types of involvement; parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community.[200]

Recognizing and Utilizing Community Assets

Epstein's comprehensive approach to creating a school learning community provides a way of recognizing and utilizing community assets. Pushor provides another way of framing the relationship between school and community, based on her work in Saskatchewan.

> A re-positioning of educators and staff as guests in a community is needed in order to interrupt this common story of educators as owners and to create a new story in which parents are welcomed into schools. When educators enter a community, they are entering a place with relationships, culture, and a history that began long before they arrived and that will continue long after they leave.[201]

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[198] Ibid., p. 88.

[199] Epstein, J. L. & Salinas, K. C. (2004). Partnering with Families and Communities, *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 12.

[200] Epstein et al (2002). *School, family and community partnerships : Your handbook for action* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

[201] Pushor, D. (2007). Welcoming Parents: Educators as Guest Hosts on School Landscapes, *Education Canada*, 47(4), p. 8.

She argues that only after educators know how to behave as 'guests' can they act as 'hosts.' Being a guest means learning about the community by "spending time and energy to know the context, the history, the culture(s), and particularly the people who reside there."[202]

Through such re-framing, educators have the opportunity to view the community-school relationship in new ways. This may open up new possibilities for seeing community resources as assets within a 'school learning community.' Huddart[203] takes the view that we need to connect schools to communities also through looking to partnerships with the voluntary sector. Initiatives, such as Historica, JUMP Math, ArtsSmarts, Learning Though the Arts, Roots of Empathy, Evergreen Foundation and Les Etablissements Verts Brundtland are some better known programs. ArtsSmarts, for example, operates as a partnership between schools and local arts groups and artists. Students are able to integrate their personal perspectives with the arts, including initiatives such as the introduction of Métis fiddling and jigging at Caslan School in Northern Alberta.

Community building also occurs in community service learning programs (as previously discussed). Experiences are authentic and relevant for students and can bring young people's energy and enthusiasm to community organizations. Again, educators need to learn about voluntary sector programs and how to work with community partners.

> Pedagogical approaches that focus on community building, that integrate community resources into the curriculum, and that situate learning in experiences in community settings, deserve consideration in terms of their contribution to both social resilience and student success.[204]

5. Technical Vocational Education

Historical Perspective on Technical and Vocational Education

Technical and vocational education began in North America early in the 20th century and was known as 'industrial arts.' The intent of this programming was to provide occupation-based training for an increasingly mechanized workforce. This "labour intensive model [focused] on selected occupations such as cabinet making, drafting, welding and so on".[205] By the 1930's, John Dewey's 'project method' had been incorporated into technical and vocational education, where educators posed a

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[202] Ibid., p. 10.

[203] Huddart, S. (2007). Investing in Resilience: Public Education and Voluntary Sector Partnerships, *Education Canada*, (47)4, 18-21.

[204] Huddart, S. (2007). Investing in Resilience: Public Education and Voluntary Sector Partnerships, *Education Canada*, (47) 4, p. 19.

[205] Clark (2000), p.5.

'problem' and learners sought to find solutions. The method of delivery for technical and vocational education was largely the 'unit shop.' Like much educational innovation, Canada followed closely in the footsteps of the United States and began integrating a system of technical and vocational education in many parts of the country.

Unfortunately, students who were less successful in traditional academic settings were funnelled into technical and vocational programming. As a result, despite its growth in North America, technical and vocational education became synonymous with lower academic standards and, as a consequence, many of these schools became 'dumping grounds' for academically unsuccessful students.

Today, technical and vocational education still suffers from the perception that it is less desirable than traditional academic education. In fact, "overcoming a negative public perception of 'voc-ed' is one of the biggest challenges facing our field.[206] While, philosophically and educationally, people understand the need for and the unique niche of technical and vocational education, this educational pathway has rarely reached its full potential.

Why has this negative perception persisted? One factor is the strength of the link between 'significant others,' particularly parents, and the educational and career decisions of youth. Historically, negative perceptions of technical and vocational education linger resulting in the ongoing struggle of aligning divergent agendas, "how one group (schooling officials), with a particular agenda in mind, struggles to change the opinions and values (and behaviour) of another societal group (parents and students), concerning the worth of vocational education."[207]

Technical and Vocational Education in Canada Today

Major changes in technical and vocational education in Canada occurred over thirty years ago, when many regional comprehensive high schools were built to provide a wide variety of technical and vocational programs under one roof. It was believed that this type of setting would graduate students ready to participate in an increasingly mechanized and technology-rich workplace.

Despite many innovations in education, many technical and vocational high schools look very similar to those build thirty years ago as no one singular model for technical and vocational education has emerged as highly successful. Canada is not alone in its search for innovation in technical and vocational education. The situation is similar in other OECD countries. In the United States; "although successful vocational programs dot each state, no state is doing an adequate job of preparing vocational students."[208]

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[206] Cutshall, (2003), p. 1.
[207] Smaller, (2000), p. 5.
[208] Rubin, (2004) p. 4.

A number of emerging issues has re-sparked interest in vocational education initiatives, including rising global competitiveness and increasingly complex school to work transitions. In addition, the perception that graduates' skills do not meet labour needs has contributed to the cry for vocational education reform. Indeed, Lehmann and Taylor postulate the debate in Canada surrounding vocational education has moved from those which dealt with high levels of youth unemployment in the early 1990's to those focused on concerns about labour shortages in the late 1990's, particularly "the lack of skilled workers in trades and other intermediate skill occupations."[209]

Vocational education reform – the 'new vocationalism' – highlights the need to bring together/combine vocational and academic programming.

> We need to move away from attempts to merely train workers for specific work tasks . . . the primary concern of schools should not be with the living young people will earn but with the life that they will lead. That is the prospect for vocational education.[210]

Ultimately, this symbolizes a commitment to bridging democratic and career education. This can best be identified as a type of 'reflective learning' that would integrate both vocational and academic components of learning.

> It is important to consider reflective learning as a process that moves back and forth between in-school sessions and workplace experiences. The energy for teaching and learning flows continually in both directions: to the workplace for observation and application, and from the workplace for description, clarification, judgment, and interpretation. Neither direction is more important than the other. It is this regular and ongoing interaction that makes possible a conceptually informed practice and a practically informed understanding of work.[211]

Recent literature has highlighted this integration of academic and vocational programming. Specifically, articles by Grubb (1996), Lehmann (2003), and Hoachlander (2007) speak to the importance of aligning academic and vocational learning opportunities for students. An approach that would facilitate this alignment is a student-centred pedagogy; vocational placements for students would be broad enough so as to not limit students' opportunities, yet simultaneously tailored to their individual interests. Vocational placements will inevitably encompass 'incidental' or informal learning situations which should also be considered as being important.

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[209] Lehmann, Wolfgang and Taylor, Alison (2003) Giving Employers What They Want? New Vocationalism in Alberta. Journal of Education and Work, Vol 16, No.1, 2003.

[210] Coffey, (1992).

[211] Simon, R., Dippo, D. & A. Shenke. (1991). *Learning work: A critical pedagogy of work education.* Toronto: OISE Press.

Students should have an understanding that society is dynamic and transformable and, as such, technical vocational programming should incorporate the principles for democratic learning (PDL) which include;

a. Career education (literacy) instruction based on PDL respects student rationality, that is, the capacity of students to critique curriculum content. When students are deprived the opportunity to question what they are learning, they become the passive objects of education rather than participatory subjects in learning.

b. Career education (literacy) programs based on PDL provide students with alternative viewpoints and perspectives on issues relevant to vocational experience. If students are expected to make informed, critical, democratic choices, they require some exposure to different perspectives on occupationally related matters.

c. Career education (literacy) instruction based on PDL does not depict social reality as fixed or predetermined, but explicitly recognizes the legitimate right of students to transform economic, labour market and working conditions through informed political participation.[212]

The literature also encourages any technical vocational program to be attentive to the issues of equity. As argued by the Labour Education and Training Research Network (2000) there are three principles upon which any vocational education program should be based:

a. The traditional mental-manual divide, in both its ideological and concrete forms, must and can be successfully bridged;

b. These programs can and must be redesigned to draw attention to, and hopefully eliminate, the biases of class, gender and race;

c. They should be planned and taught in ways that would appeal to the needs and interests of students.

The literature regarding technical and vocational education today does not point to one model of implementation that is most successful and can be easily replicated. However, it does identify particular components that can contribute to success in technical and vocational education, some of which are now discussed.

Aligning Academic and Technical Vocational Programming

Much of the research into validated practices in technical and vocational education is organized around the principle of aligning academic and technical vocational programming. The alignment of school-based and work-based learning, academic and vocational programming, and secondary and post-secondary education; "can eliminate the boundary between academic and vocational education, and combine practice and theory to better educate students in obtaining necessary skills and knowledge."[213] Aligning these elements leads to 'balanced' technical and vocational programming that prepares students for a rapidly changing economy.

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[212] Hyslop-Margison & Graham, (2001). p. 342.

Bottoms, in his work with "The High Schools That Work," suggests that if all students were provided with the same challenges and opportunities frequently offered only to the 'best' students, increased student engagement and preparedness for success after graduation would be more widespread. As he suggests, "rather than an alternative to post-secondary education, career and technical education could become the key to making post-secondary education an achievable goal for all high school students". However, to achieve this goal schools need to:

> . . . not only infuse more demanding academic content into career and technical education courses but also stress more authentic applications in ... mathematics, science, English and social studies ... if we really want to reengage students in high school, we need to create pathways that blend academics with career and technical education.[214]

Practices identified as being central to "High Schools That Work" include: high expectations, a rigorous program of study, academic studies, intellectually challenging career/technical studies, work-based learning, teachers working together, students actively engaged, a guidance and advisement system, a structured system of extra help, and a culture of continuous improvement.

Apprenticeship

In Canada, the provinces and territories are responsible for apprenticeship training which has resulted in Canada currently having 13 different apprenticeship systems. While the Federal government promotes apprenticeship at the national level, each province and territory governs their own training and certification policies with local legislation enabling each to designate apprenticeship programs to meet their particular needs. Educational structures and institutions have been developed to respond to these needs resulting in a multiplicity of approaches to administering apprenticeship.[215] Employers and unions play important leadership roles within each jurisdiction by guiding provincial and territorial officials and providing input into training programs – in some many cases offering training themselves.

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[213] Wu, (2004), p. 11.

[214] Bottoms, (2007), p. 34.

[215] Charnow Lior, K. & Wortsman, A (2006). *Renewing Apprenticeship: Innovative Approaches*. The Toronto Training Board.

Lior and Wortsman (2006) looked at four cases where innovative approaches were being pursued in the attempt to renew and revive apprenticeship training some of which involved engaging traditionally uninvolved populations. For example, one innovative project involved a Carpenter's Local Training centre partnering with several community organizations to assist youth-at-risk, the homeless, and other disadvantaged individuals to develop life and trade skills. "One of the most innovative partnerships was the Pre-Apprenticeship Program with the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, the Ontario's Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and the YMCA."[216] This project successfully demonstrated a "creative approach to simultaneously addressing skill shortages, social challenges and improving people's lives."[217]

A second successful project was the ThinkTrades: Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Project (AAAP) established in 2001. Project sponsors included Aboriginal groups, educational organizations, industry, in addition to both federal and provincial governments. The project was implemented in five Alberta communities. It incorporated an educational support model which recognized cultural differences and provided supports to candidates. The supports were critical in ensuring the apprentices were successful. The authors argued that the four case studies established the importance of:

a. Bringing new groups into the apprenticeship system,

b. Forming partnerships that are grounded in and reflect the community,

c. Long-term funding is necessary to allow programs to work,

d. Sharing what works and what dosen't work cuts down on the time as shown by the experience of the Alberta Aboriginal project.

Fownes and Evetts (2001) argue that "when essential skills are considered, there is a large 'disconnect' between high school preparation and the skills and knowledge needed in apprenticeship."[218] If strategies are to be developed to meet student and community needs more effectively, the "chasm between apprenticeship and education" has to be addressed. "From Ministry level to the instructors to the apprentices, this division is preventing effective synergy. It is time to join forces."[219]

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[216] Ibid., p. 9.

[217] Ibid., p. 10.

[218] Fownes, Lynda & Evetts, Julian. (2001). *Essential Skills and Success in Apprenticeship*. SkillPlan. BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council.

[219] Ibid., p. 26.

One suggestion is to:

> Educate the education system about apprenticeship. Almost every jurisdiction has high school apprenticeship programs. Make materials available that demonstrate how essential skills are used in apprenticeship. Support generic applied learning initiatives such as applied math, technical and professional communication and applied science. Co-develop courses specific to trades.[220]

D. Structures and Schedules

1. Optimum School Size

School Size Debate

Although there has been considerable interest in effects of school size on students over the last fifteen years, this debate is not new. In 1959, the publication of James Conant's book *The American High School* urged educators to create large, comprehensive high schools in order to meet the rigor of an increasingly 'scientific' world. The rise of large scale factories as the preferred mode of modern production coupled with increasing populations in North American urban centres created a movement toward larger schools. In 2002, Rick Allen indicated 70 percent of high school students in the United States attended schools with a student body larger than 1000 students.[221]

In many urban centres, larger schools are a reality, because of their perceived economic benefits (economies of scale) and the range of curricular choices. Interestingly, Ready, Lee, and Welner stated: "although greater size is assumed to result in economic efficiency, savings projected by proponents have seldom materialized."[222] Advocates of larger secondary schools claim more diversified curricular offerings are an outcome of bigger schools. However, there is some debate in the literature as to whether or not this is an advantage: "increasing size promotes curriculum specialization, resulting in differentiation of students' academic experiences, and ultimately to social stratification of student outcomes."[223] Curriculum specialization in this context means 'tracking' or 'streaming' of students, often with the result being that students from less privileged groups are placed into less challenging academic programs that do not provide them with the same quality of education or foundation for future educational options.

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[220] Ibid., p. 27.

[221] Allen, R. (2002). Big Schools: The Way We Are. *Educational Leadership*, 59(5), p. 36.

[222] Ready, D. D., V. E. Lee, et al. (2004). Educational Equity and School Structure: School Size, Overcrowding, and Schools-within-Schools. *Teachers College Record*, 106(10), p. 1991.

[223] Ibid., p. 1992.

Detractors of large schools argue that these settings negatively affect student outcomes by affecting social and engagement factors associated with school success: "large schools tend to have low rates of student activity participation. Several researchers have found a tendency for attendance rates to decrease and dropout rates to increase with an increase in school size."[224] This was thought to most negatively affect minority and marginalized students; however, research conducted in 84 schools and almost 15,000 students in the United States indicated:

> A lack of race/ethnic difference in the interpersonal effects of school size suggests that such reform will benefit students of all race/ethnicities... moreover, that race/ethnic differences in the academic impact of school size may be less related to interpersonal dynamics in the school and more related to curriculum and instruction.[225]

In addition, some research indicates larger secondary schools negatively impact student achievement, although there is not consensus on this issue. Pamela Gardner and colleagues' research in 67 California high schools concluded: "large California public schools [with 2,000 or more students] had higher academic achievement than small...public high schools...on all four [SAT] measures of achievement."[226]

As early as 1964, research by Barker and Gump had published *Big School, Small School*, extolling the virtues of small schools. The school size debate smoldered in educational research, with information on both sides coming to the fore from time to time. However, the late 1980s and early 1990s saw a renewal of school size research, including reports by the Carnegie Council for Adolescent Development in 1989, entitled *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*, which called for smaller school settings. A number of organizations and private foundations have considered the school size debate, including the Coalition for Essential Schools, the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Coalition for Small Schools, and the U.S. Department of Education's Smaller School Communities, to name only a few.

Small school supporters see a smaller environment as positively affecting student outcomes. Small school advocates argue:

> Small school cultures promote social equity, narrower academic achievement gaps between socio-economically disadvantaged and affluent student, reduction in student drop-out rates and higher attendance levels, safer schools, student emotional stability

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[224] Alspaugh, J. W. (1998). The Relationship of School-to-School Transitions and School Size to High School Drop Out Rates. *High School Journal*, 81(3), page number not available.

[225] Crosnoe, R., Johnson, M. K. et al. (2004). School Size and the Interpersonal Side of Education: An Examination of Race/Ethnicity and Organizational Context. *Social Science Quarterly*, *85*(5), p. 1272.

[226] Gardner, P. W., Ritblatt, S. N. et al. (2000). Academic Achievement and Parental School Involvement as a Function of High School Size. *High School Journal*, *83*(2), page number not available.

> and character development, and increased student, parent and community satisfaction.[227]

This view is echoed by parents and teachers, with parents indicating that smaller environments means students are not as socially isolated, more engaged in learning and more likely to receive the attention they need to prevent them from 'falling through the cracks.'[228] These factors affect student absenteeism and drop-out rates, with research indicating that larger environment have higher rates of both.[229] In addition to the interpersonal and engagement benefits, Schmidt, Murray and Nguyen indicate small schools may also have economic benefits:

> Reduced costs [are] associated with less frequent student discipline issues. As our own report indicates, violence and even vandalism, is less frequent in small schools than in larger schools. When comparing the 'cost pre student' and 'cost pre graduate,' small schools might cost more upfront if capital and other costs are considered.... A compelling argument can be made that funding a completed education is more cost-effective than continually paying the cost of 'recycling' student dropouts who must be continually re-integrated into the schools system.[230]

While there is evidence that small schools may benefit students, that does not mean that 'the smaller the school the better.' There needs to be a critical mass of students in order to provide quality programming, although research does not postulate precisely what that critical number might be.

What is Optimal School Size for Secondary Schools?

The debate over school size continues with compelling arguments on both sides, making it difficult to identify what research says is 'optimal school size.' Nevertheless, some have tried, including John Goodlad who suggested the upper limit of school size ideally as being 500 to 600 students. The Carnegie Foundation concurs, indicating its preference for school units of no more than 600 students.[231]

Lee and Smith's oft quoted research considered the question of optimal school size within 800 public and private schools in the United States and sought to find a balance between student learning and school size. Their findings indicated:

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[227] Schmid, M., Murray, C, and Nguhen, H. (2007). Cohesive Communities, Improved Schools: A Case for Small Schools. *Education Canada*, 47(4), p. 59.

[228] Johnson, J. (2002). Will Parents and Teachers Get on the Bandwagon to Reduce School Size? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 83(5), p. 355.

[229] Both Aspaugh, J. W. (1998) and Gardner, P. W., Ritblatt, S. N. et al. (2000) indicate that larger schools in the United States have higher drop-out rates and absenteeism.

[230] Schmid, M., Murray, C, and Nguhen, H. (2007). Cohesive Communities, Improved Schools: A Case for Small Schools. *Education Canada*, 47(4), 59-61.

[231] Ready, D. D., V. E. Lee, et al. (2004). Educational Equity and School Structure: School Size, Overcrowding, and Schools-within-Schools. *Teachers College Record*, 106(10), p. 1993.

> Achievement gains in mathematics and reading over the course of high school were found to be the largest in middle-sized high schools (600-900 students). Schools of this size were also favored in terms of social equity, in that they had weaker relationships between student socioeconomic status (SES) and achievement.[232]

However, it is important to consider this research occurs in the American context, where populations are considerably higher than Canada and secondary schools of over 1000 students are very much the norm. Unfortunately, no information indicating what would be the optimal size of a Canadian secondary school exists.

Beyond School Size

The same researchers who puzzle over school size invite educators to consider deeper questions than simply 'what is the size of school that best suits students' needs?' They contend the focus should more appropriately be "what do we really want to accomplish at this school, and what is the optimal number of student to achieve these goals?"[233] Schools need to ask questions regarding what is going to 'get it right for students' and not primarily on school size. Schmidt, Murray and Nguyen suggest that questions pertaining to what types of schools are desirable should be the starting point: "Canadians must ask difficult questions: What kind of education do we want to make available for our youth so that they can contribute meaningfully to society and how can we as a community do this?"[234]

2. Learning Locations

For as long as most can remember, the paradigm for secondary school organization has been within a single, distinct, stand-alone facility. However, the 'school reform' movement of the later half of the twentieth century urged educators to consider other possibilities for secondary schools, both organizationally and physically. This has given rise to a number of organizational or campus options.

Schools-within-Schools

The 'small schools movement' described above prompted educators to consider ways to reduce the size of secondary schools in order that students could reap the benefits of smaller learning communities. This has given rise to a number of campus options, the most prominent of which is the schools-within-schools (SWS). In fact, recently both Raywid and Deborah Meier note that a preferable name may be 'school-within-a-building.'[235]

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[232] Ibid., pp. 1991-1993.
[233] Ibid., p. 2008.
[234] Schmidt, M., Murray, C, and Nguhen, H. (2007). Cohesive Communities, Improved Schools: A Case for Small Schools. *Education Canada*, 47(4), p. 61.
[235] Cotton, K. (2001). New Small Learning Communities. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Retrieved from http://www3.scasd.org/small_schools/nlsc.pdf, p. 10.

Championed by Mary Anne Raywid, schools-within-schools can be organized in a number of ways; however, the hallmark of these organizations is to create clusters of smaller learning communities within one building. Generally speaking, SWS include two or more learning communities with self-selected staff and students. Organizationally, they can be completely autonomous, with their own programming, staff and administration or they can have differing programming areas but share administration. Moreover, schools-within-schools can be district initiated, principle-inspired, or more grassroots in origin.[236]

Irrespective of how they are organized, each 'school' in a 'schools-within-schools' structure has distinguishing factors. One structure includes the house plan, where schools are organized into 'houses' where plans involve:

> Students in each house may take some of their core courses together and share the same teachers, and each has is own discipline policies and student government. The house plan usually coexists with the larger school's departmentalized structure and shares the school's curriculum, instructional approaches, and sometimes its extracurricular program as well.[237]

Houses can be organized by grade level or across grades, although there is a common preference for a Grade 9 house, as these early secondary students were viewed as often needing support within the larger and unfamiliar structure of the secondary school.

The career academy, career cluster or pathways form a second type of SWS campus structure. All of these arrangements are based on broad occupation/industry areas such as the hospitality industry or natural resources. These schools "organize students according to their career goals and interest and become the foundation for integration of high academic standards, technical skills and knowledge."[238] Career academies or pathways often have work education components and are intended to dovetail with high education and/or employment.

It is important to note that SWS are not just schools whose buildings are organized into 'sections' or 'wings.' Each 'school' in SWS has distinct purposes and may have offer different courses and options for students. Schools-within-schools also have some unique challenges, as "we have yet to create the structure and policies that they need to thrive."[239]

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[236] Raywid, M. A. (2002). The Policy Environments of Small Schools and Schools-within-Schools. *Educational Leadership*, *59*(5), p. 49.

[237] Cotton, K. (2001). New Small Learning Communities. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Retrieved from http://www3.scasd.org/small_schools/nlsc.pdf, p. 10.

[238] Ibid., p. 10-11.

[239] Raywid, M. A. (2002). The Policy Environments of Small Schools and Schools-within-Schools. *Educational Leadership*, *59*(5), p. 47.

Shared Campus

An example of a shared campus school can be found in Scotland where in October 2004, Dalkeith High School was integrated into the Dalkeith Schools Community Campus, along with St. David's Roman Catholic High School and Saltersgate School, a special education facility, making it the first such joint secondary school campus in Scotland. The shared campus resulted from a desire to deliver a higher standard of education at a lower cost. Furthermore, there was a belief that the shared campus would allow for better facilities than each school would receive if left on their own. Facilities now include a track, an all weather pitch, a cricket ground, a gymnasium, recording studios and a theatre.[240]

Under the Education 2010 PPP Project North Lanarkshire Council (Scotland) is building a number of shared campus schools. As of February 2008, seven primary schools represent a joint campus project in Bargeddie, Caldercruix, Chapelhall, Glenboig, New Stevenston (New Stevenston includes a public library), Plains and Wishaw. Under the shared campus model each of the schools retains its own identity and autonomy, including its own staff, head teacher, management structure, aims, culture, and teaching facilities. Other facilities and infrastructure such as social and dining areas, libraries, sports facilities, tutorial rooms and audio-visual rooms will be shared. An evaluation of the shared campus schools "showed high levels of support ... pupils like the new facilities and enjoy meeting more people and making new friends, parents see improved interaction among children and between communities, while the schools themselves enjoyed increased collaboration and joint initiatives."[241]

Another example of a planned shared campus is the University Square educational park project which will join the University of New Orleans, Southeastern Louisiana and Louisiana Technical College with St. Tammany Parish School System. This is being planned as a way to provide enhanced programming for gifted and talented students with the combination of high school, technical vocational, community college and university facilities on one campus.[242]

In Yorkton, Saskatchewan, M.C. Knoll School and St. Michael's School shared school opened in 1998. M.C. Knoll is a Kindergarten to Grade 8 school. St. Michael's is also a Kindergarten to Grade 8, as well as a dual track school.[243] Another example finds the Seattle School Board in the initial stages of "co-locating" a middle school onto a high school's campus. Intended benefits from this plan include increased academic benefits such as, collaboration among teachers and students, peer tutoring and lower drop-out rates.[244]

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[240] Retrieved from http://boxback.wordpress.com/2007/04/13/

[241] Retrieved from North Lanarkshire Council, web site: http://www.northlan.gov.uk

[242] Retrieved from http://thesttammanynews.com/articles/2008/03/03/

[243] Source: Saskatchewan Bulletin October 26, 2005.

[244] Retrieved from http://www.westseattleherald.com/articles/2008/02/08/

Scatterplexes also provide a model for secondary school campuses that may be at a distance. Within this arrangement, a single school is distributed into two or more buildings under the guidance of a single administration.[245] Only a few examples of these schools exist, while most include both a middle and secondary school.

Magnet Schools

The desire of parents and families for more school choice within a public system has prompted the creation of more specialized schools. Among these are 'magnet' schools, sometimes referred to as "thematic island of choice... [that] subscribe to a particular philosophy or curricular specialty, drawing students who share that interest."[246]

Like many educational trends in Canada, magnet schools originated in the United States in the 1970s, primarily to support racial desegregation efforts.[247] Since then, magnet schools have sprung up across North America:

> Magnet schools are public schools that offer specialized instructional programs in particular disciplines. For example, there are magnet schools that offer concentrations in math and science and others that specialize in the arts and or humanities. Magnet schools are designed to accommodate students with particular interests and scholastic ability, and to this end, the curricula reflect high academic standards...the name 'magnet' reflects the draw with which magnet school receive students. Students may live in any surrounding area and apply to the magnet school.[248]

Within Canada, magnet schools were prompted by "the inability of the 'one size fits all' neighbourhood school to meet the rising and widely varied expectations of parents...."[249] At their best, magnet schools are centres of excellence in a particular area or that use a particular pedagogy or approach. In the Canadian context, magnet schools operate within a public system and adhere to "a framework of standards set by the government which provides funding."[250] Furthermore, magnet schools can focus on a particular sector/occupation or field of study and are referred to, at times, as 'career academies.' Within the larger framework of a school jurisdiction, magnet schools offer students and families choice based on student interest and/or differing ways of meeting students' needs.

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[245] Cotton, K. (2001). New Small Learning Communities. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Retrieved from http://www3.scasd.org/small_schools/nlsc.pdf. p. 11.

[246] Hadderman, M. (2002). *Trends and Issues: School Choice*, ERIC document # ED472995, p. 5.

[247] Halqust, D. (2003). Red, Yellow, Blue: A Primary Study of the Strengths, Limitations and Challenges of Arts Magnet Schools. ERIC document # ED477146, p. 2.

[248] Banks, B. & Green, D. (2008). Are Magnet Schools the Answer to Integrating Schools?. *Issues in Higher Education*, 25(3), p. 27.

[249] Rahan, H. (1998). Choice and Charter Schools in Canada : The Myths, Politics and Realities. P. 2.

[250] Ibid.

Research findings are mixed as to whether magnet schools improve student achievement. Some studies conducted in the United States indicate students in magnet schools perform better on standardized tests, however researchers caution to "look beyond student achievement scores" as a measure of the success of magnet schools."[251]

Distance Learning

Sources from Canada and United States have similar definitions of distance learning. Defined quite broadly in the literature, distance learning is described as courses of study where learners and teachers are in different locations: "les apprenants ne soient tenus de se rendre sur place."[252] This may include different styles of presentation or platforms, ranging from web-based courses to video-conferencing.

Although various types of distance learning have been in existence for some time, Revenaugh reports increasing use of distance learning opportunities by Kindergarten to Grade 8 learners. In the United States, distance learning is now being accessed more often by students with special needs, particularly students who are medically complex or may have to spend time in hospital; by elite athletes who have specific needs due to training and travel/competition schedules; as well as by students living at a distance from school and who would otherwise have considerable travel time.[253]

Anderson and Rourke also highlight video-conferencing as a way of meeting needs of special populations. In addition to providing educational options to learners in remote communities, these authors mention video-conferencing as a means of "assist[ing] youth to re-enter their schools and communities after periods of incarceration."[254] Visually-enhanced distance education was also described as useful for learners who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Not surprisingly, effective learning at a distance involves the same principles as effective learning in the classroom. The technology or platform of distance learning should be seen as a tool or method; however the principles of effective learning remain the same. Tom Clark, in his study of virtual schools in the United States, reminds educators to "focus on the learning rather than the technology,"[255] and to "seek to make the student services for virtual students equivalent in quality to those provided for face-to-face learners."[256]

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[251] Hadderman, M. (2002). *Trends and Issues : Magnet Schools.* ERIC document # ED472996, pp. 3-5.

[252] D'Ortun, F. (2004). La Formation à distance; pristes de réussite pour l;apprenant et l'université. *Education Canada*, 44(3), p. 16.

[253] Revenaugh, M. (2005/2006). K-8 Virtual Schools: A Glimpse into the Future. *Educational Leadership*, 63(4), p. 60.

[254] Anderson, T. & Rourke, L. (2005). *Video-conferencing in Kindergarten-to-Grade 12 Settings: A Review of the Literature.* Alberta Learning, p. 13.

[255] Clark, T. (2001). Virtual School: Trends and Issues: A study of Virtual Schools in the United States, p. 25.

[256] Ibid., p. 26.

In fact, Theirry Karsenti, Associate Professor at Faculty of Education at Université de Montréal, contends technologically-based learning can expand the possibilities of effective practice:

> ...as these innovations [ICTs] greatly augment the possibilities of network implementation and of individual and group learning, the most basic teaching theories and principles such as Thorndike (law of effect and law of exercise), Dewey (learning through action), Piaget (construction of knowledge) and Vygotsky (learning as a socio-interactive process) can be applied more readily and more frequently.[257]

The American Distance Learning Consortium's[258] guiding principles for distance learning provide a starting point for the elements of effective delivery of distance learning. This consortium elaborates that distance learning opportunities should be:

- Designed for active and effective learning;
- Support the needs of learners through orientation to the process of learning at a distance, tutorial support, student advising and counseling, technical support, library information and access, and problem-solving assistance;
- Develop and maintain technological and human infrastructure to ensure the provider of distance learning has the technology plan and human resources; and,
- Sustain administration and commitment to quality distance education.

Finally, Anderson and Rourke's literature review of video-conferencing highlighted 'best practice' in this medium which could also be applied to distance learning in general. In addition to the principles already mentioned, these authors draw attention to the need for leadership and vision to guide distance learning initiatives, as well as emphasize the importance of equitable access, simplicity of operation, clearly outlined participant costs, effective interaction between students and teachers, timely service provision, and clear communication of behavioural expectations when using distance learning opportunities.[259]

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[257] Karsenti, T. (2001). From Blackboard to Mouse Pad: Training Teacher for the New Millennium. *Education Canada*, 41(2), p. 32.

[258] The American Distance Learning Consortium is an American non-profit distance education consortium composed of 65 post-secondary institutions and developed to promote the creation and provision of high quality, economical distance education programs and services to diverse audiences. For more information see http://www.adec.edu/admin/adec-background.html.

[259] Anderson, T. & Rourke, L. (2005), p. 14.

E-Learning/Cyber Learning

The advent of new digital technologies opens up possibilities in distance learning and networking of school settings far a field from one another. Recently, the literature makes reference to blended learning, which combines more traditional classroom methods with online approaches. Quebec's l'École éloignée en réseau (ÉÉR) seeks to enhance learning environments of over 100 remote schools by creating a digital network. Under this initiative, students and educators in different communities are working collaboratively using mentoring, 'distance' team teaching, and collaborative planning and projects.[260] This type of technology also allows for learning opportunities beyond the regular school day, thus helping to meet the differing needs of students.[261] An initiative of the Ministry of Education and the Centre francophone d'information des organizations, this network increased access to quality learning opportunities through teleconferencing over the internet (using computer, webcam and microphone) linking students and providing different learning situations.[262]

Newfoundland and Labrador's Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation creates networked virtual classrooms through high speed internet:

> This model permits aboriginal and other students in our most northerly communities to learn mathematics in the same class with students in communities on the island or in other parts of Labrador…Students and e-teachers communicate with one another in real time and use a computer screen in the same way that a traditional teacher could use a chalkboard, with technology known as graphire tablets.[263]

Networked learning creates a virtual community of learners. Oliver, Herrington, Herrington, and Reeves indicate this enhances the online learning experience:

> More and more, students in online learning settings are taking ownership of their learning and being encouraged to work collaboratively with their peers and others as an integral part of the learning experience. The advantages and opportunities that stem from communities of learners and collaborative learning activities have long been recognized as important, and shown to

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[260] Laferrière, T. (2007/08). L'École éloignée en réseau, une approche qui prend racine en sol québécois... *Education Canada*, 48(1), p. 30-31.

[261] Pape, L. (2006). From Bricks to Clicks: Blurring Classroom/Cyber Lines. *School Administrator, 63(7)*, 18-23.

[262] For more information regarding Écoles éloignées en réseau, see Laferrière, T. (2007/2008). L'École éloignée en réseau, une approche qui prend racine en sol québécois. *Education Canada*, 48(1), 30-31 and Laferrière, T. (2004). L'École éloignée en réseau, une école sur la voie de l'amélioration. *Education Canada, 44(3)*, 42-44.

[263] Press, H., Galway, G. & Collins, A. (2003). Maintaining Quality Programming in Rural Newfoundland and Labrador: A Case Study in Policy and Structural Change. *Education Canada*, 43(3), pp. 23 & 38.

> provide considerable learning opportunities . . . . Learning can be enhanced through the dialogue and discussion that is involved and the collaboration itself can help generate learning communities that offer tangible forms of support for the learners.[264]

3. Community Sharing and Integration

Organizational Partnering

The importance of partnerships cannot be understated within the context of education in Canada today. Educational literature proliferates with the mention of partnerships and their possibilities for meeting diverse student needs. Nevertheless, partnerships in education often mean partnering with organizations within the structure of traditional schools. As previously mentioned, examples of these include JUMP Math, ArtsSmarts, or Learning Through the Arts, where partner organizations bring educators together with other professionals within schools to present different learning options for students.

Organizational partnering can also occur between secondary and post-secondary institutions. The most common of which include concurrent enrollment and enrichment models. The concurrent enrollment models allow secondary students to take post-secondary courses while still enrolled at high school, while the enrichment model focuses on enrichment for students who may not have been successful in traditional school settings or for those under-represented in secondary education.[265]

Facility Partnering

Less frequent are references to shared facility partnerships. The most common of these are partnerships with post-secondary education and training institutions.[266] However, it is important to note, that under these partnership arrangements students from secondary school use facilities with post-secondary institution, students are often expected to enroll in post secondary training or courses.[267]

Examples of shared facilities with community organizations are far more rare; however, one model is the shared community campus model. An example, the Asper

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[264] Oliver, R., Herrington, A., Herrington, J. & Reeves, T. (2007). Representing Authentic Learning Designs Supporting the Development of Online Communities of Learners. Journal of Learning Design, 2(2), pp. 1-2.

[265] Greenberg, A. (1992). High School - College Partnerships: Conceptual Models, Programs, and Issues. *ERIC Digest*. Retrieved from http://www.ericdigests.org/1992-2/high.htm. Page numbers not available.

[266] In Whitehorse, students enrolled in experiential sciences and fine arts programming at the Wood Street Centre use facilities at Yukon College and the Yukon Arts Centre.

[267] Examples of these types of high school post secondary partnerships include the Edmonton Area Post-Secondary/High School Partnerships. For more information see http://www.advanededucation.gov.ab.ca/substats/CampusPolicy/default.asp?Chapter=Appendix.

Jewish Campus in Winnipeg, includes an early/middle years school, a secondary school, a daycare, a community centre with fitness facilities, a theatre, as well as the offices of community-based social service agencies and cultural organizations. Within the Campus, the library and gymnasia are shared by the school and community. Similarly, the Northfield Community Centre in Minnesota "services residents of this rural community throughout their lives," by housing a school with a senior centre and other community facilities.[268]

4. Alternative Schedules

The school improvement/school reform movement of the past decades has prompted educators to examine and re-consider all aspects of educational organization as well as educational practice. Within this framework, new models for the organization of time have been developed and implemented in Canada and elsewhere.[269] In 1994, the National Commission on Time and Learning (United States) produced *Prisoners of Time*, "which warned that schools must be reinvented to focus on learning, not time."[270] Literature on alternative schedules stresses the importance that schedule changes should to be motivated by what is good for students not just schedule modifications for their own sake, with a focus on improving instructional strategies.[271]

The School Year

The traditional September to June school calendar was based on the economic requirements of a largely agrarian society. In North America, this no longer reflects the reality of many. As a result, some educators advocate changing the school calendar. There have been many experiments in changing school calendars throughout North America dating back to the early 1900's.[272] These early experiments were interrupted by the World Wars and were not taken up again until much later. More recently,

> Nearly 2.2 million students enrolled in more than 3,000 k-12 schools followed a year-round schedule during the 2005-2006 school year, according to figures which have been furnished by the National Association for Year-Round Education. This number of student represents an 11% increase when compared with the figure of five years ago,...[273]

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[268] Nathan, J. (2002). Small Schools: The Benefits of Sharing. *Educational Leadership, 59*(5), p.74.

[269] Roberta Bondar Public School in Toronto (K-8) and a number of schools within the Calgary Board of Education operate on a modified school year.

[270] Queen, J. (2000). Block Scheduling Revisited. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(3), p. 1.

[271] West, M. (1996). Block Schedule: Breaking the Barriers. ERIC document#ED400607, p. 8.

[272] Palmer, E. & Bemis, A. (1999). Year-Round Education, p. 1.

[273] St. Gerard, V. (2007). Year-Round Schools Look Better All the Time. *Education Digest*, 72(8), p. 56. Please note these numbers refer to the United States.

Although this model operates in Canada, national statistics concerning the number of schools or students attending modified calendar schools is not known.

While the modified calendar model is often referred to as 'year round schooling' or 'year round education,' this is, in fact, a misnomer. Students in modified calendar schools generally receive between 180 and 220 instructional days per school year, similar to the number received by their peers following a 'traditional' calendar. However, the distinguishing factor of a modified calendar model is a reorganized calendar that more evenly distributes instructional and vacation periods throughout the year.

As stated by the National Association for Year Round Education:

> The balanced calendar reduces long summer breaks and simply apportions those days throughout the school year, producing more frequent breaks and thus limiting long period of in-session days, as well as longer vacations.[274]

In modified calendar schools, instructional and intersession periods follow a variety of schedules, including 45 instructional days and 10 or 15 day vacation days apportioned throughout the year. Sixty day instructional periods with 10 or 15 day inter-sessions are also used. However, the 45-15 and 45-10 calendars "account for the largest percent of year-round calendars."[275] Furthermore, modified calendars may operate on single- or multi- track systems. In single-track schools, all students attend at the same time, while multi-track schools have staggered attendance. Multi-track systems were developed largely to deal with school overcrowding.

Modified calendar models have their advocates and detractors, producing a mine field of educational literature both 'for' and 'against.' As might be expected, the National Association for Year Round Education is a strong advocate, and promotes research extolling the benefits of modified calendars.

Advocates contend the more continuous learning patterns of the modified calendar reduce the need for review and provide opportunities for remediation during inter-sessions. Students are said to be more enthusiastic and motivated about school. In addition, advocates indicate teachers on a modified calendar experience less burnout and absenteeism, and spend less time reviewing material. However, the reader is cautioned that these advantages fall more into the realm of perception, as "most of the research to date has been incomplete or poorly designed, leaving educators at a loss for solid data upon which to draw conclusions."[276]

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[274] National Association for Year Round Education at http://www.nayre.org.

[275] Palmer, E. & Bemis, A. (1999). Year-Round Education, p. 2.

[276] Ibid., p. 1.

Those less in favor of modified calendars contend that the model has little impact on student achievement. Charlie Naylor has conducted a meta-analysis of research on modified calendars for the British Columbia Teachers Federation and concludes "methodological problems with many of the studies, [stem from] difficulty in isolating the variable of school calendar in relation to student achievement."[277] In addition, Naylor emphasizes the use of standardized tests alone as a measure of student achievement can be problematic.

Irrespective of their support for modified calendar models, researchers indicate there is often resistance to implementation of modified calendars, as they break with long-standing school traditions. As well, frustration for families has also been reported when children experience different vacation periods.

Modified calendar schools may have particular applications in technical and vocational education. For example, students acquiring skill sets relevant to occupational clusters with seasonal variations, modified calendars may better suit students' needs. In addition, opportunities for job placements and mentoring may be more easily accommodated in a modified calendar's inter-session periods. In addition, modifications to the school year may also support experiential programming, where students spend periods in field study. Finally, changes to the school calendar may allow Yukon secondary students from communities outside of Whitehorse to spend shorter periods away from home communities by choosing to attend school in Whitehorse for certain segments of the year.

The School Day

Within a school improvement framework, educators have also explored possibilities for changes to traditional timetabling as a way of better meeting the needs of students. In particular, an article by Massachusetts superintendent Joseph Carroll, appearing in the January 1990 issue of Phi Delta Kappan, provides a reconceptualiztion of school change around the reorganization of time. Carroll's 'Copernican timetable'[278] was intended as an agent for secondary school reform by instituting fewer courses during longer time slots per semester in the hopes that lengthening instruction periods would prompt changes in teacher practice.[279]

The 'traditional' timetable where students attended eight courses rotating across all days in the timetable required short class times, usually with five minute breaks between classes. Within this system, teachers would generally see many students a day and teach several different subjects. A semester system with four to five classes per day reduces this to a degree. However, the Copernican (or Quarter System) model offers far fewer courses in longer time slots. Within the Copernican model, timetabling systems may vary.[280] Like the modified calendar model, the Copernican timetable has its advocates and detractors. Those in favour indicate "longer block schedules help schools focus more on depth in the curriculum and active student engagement."[281] For staff, a Copernican timetable generally means teaching fewer subjects and students per day. However, a significant motivation behind the adoption of a Copernican model is change in teacher practice.

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[277] Naylor, C. (1995). Cost Effectiveness of Year-Round Schooling: An Annotated Bibliography and Synthesis of the Research, BC Teachers' Federation, p. 1.

[278] The Copernican timetable is also known as the Quarter System.

[279] Carroll, J. (1990). The Copernican Plan: Restructuring the American High School. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 71, pp. 358-360.

In contrast, detractors believe a Copernican model can produce long periods of time between class offerings in a given subject and if students are absent for a few days they miss a significant amount of time in each subject. In addition, the implementation of a Copernican model necessitates staff development to ensure teachers are sufficiently prepared with teaching strategies appropriate for longer time blocks. Cushman further cautions that the adoption of timetable changes must have a philosophical underpinning, and "the quality of student-teacher interchanges drives the schedule."[282]

Research into the biological sleep patterns of adolescents has revealed that circadian rhythms during this stage of life are different from children and adults; "adolescents prefer to go to sleep later at night and wake up later in the day."[283] As a result, sleep researchers questioned whether school day schedules were in students' best interest: "school schedules are forcing them to lose sleep and to perform academically when they are at their worst."[284]

Educators have responded by implementing later starts to school days.[285] An interesting new alternative school day, known as the 'twilight school,' is an approach for at-risk students within an alternative school model. Twilight schools operate in the later afternoon and into the evening.[286] While this respects the biological sleep patterns of adolescents, this approach also allows students to work at other times of the day, possibly creating a smoother path from school to work.

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[280] Two of the most frequently mentioned Copernican timetable models include the 'A/B Block,' where a block of four classes meet one day and another four the next, and the '4x4 Block' where four classes meet every day for a term. Other variation and hybrids of these models are also found in the literature. For a more in-depth discussion of Copernican or block scheduling options, see Doughtery, B. (1998). Policy Briefing: Block Scheduling in Secondary Schools. Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, ERIC document #ED415587.

[281] Cushman, K. (1995). Using time Well: Schedule in Essential Schools. *Horace*, 12(2), page numbers not available.

[282] Ibid.

[283] Hansen, M., Janssen, I., Schiff, A., Zee, P., & Dubocovich, M. (2005). The Impact of School Daily Schedule on Adolescent Sleep, *Pediatrics*, 115(6), p. 1555

[284] Ibid., p. 1560.

[285] Minneapolis Public School District shifted school start times from 7:15 am to 8:40 am. A longitudinal study of this initiative reported positive results, such as increased attendance .

[286] Stevenson, K. (2007). Education Trends Shaping School Planning and Design, National Clearinghouse of Educational Facilities.

E. School Design

1. The Basics

> *"School buildings have been and continue to be places to warehouse children. New schools just do it in more comfortable settings."*
>
> \- Nair, 2002.

Much of the literature related to school design discusses factors such as natural lighting, acoustics/sound control, security, indoor air quality, ventilation and thermal comfort/temperature. As noted by Schneider, "we already know what is needed: clean air, good light, and a quiet, comfortable, and safe learning environment."[287] It has also been argued that colour has an influence on the learning process. Jago and Tanner, when summarizing the impact of the school on student achievement, suggested "it is evident that lighting, colour choices and windows play a significant role in the achievement of students."[288] Fielding identifies what he labels the "seven myths about lighting and colour in educational architecture."[289] These myths include; "the need for uniform brightness level, primary colours for children, red incites aggression and green is calming, neutral colours are best, it's best to use all the same lamps, it's best not to use natural light in gymnasiums, and performance spaces should not have any windows." According to him these concepts are rooted in the past and have either been proven to be incorrect or no longer relevant for the learner of today.

Furthermore, it is argued that "identical school facilities" do not result in equal educational opportunities for students. "While some students function measurably better in one kind of environment, others perform more effectively in another; the differences depend on student talents, abilities and needs."[290] This argument is supported by Nair who asks, "Is it equitable to treat all people and all communities as if they were the same? True equity will focus on the idea of equalizing opportunities for every child to succeed. That might mean spending more effort or money in some locations and offering a variety of solutions tailored to the particular characteristics of each client community."[291]

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[287] Schneider, M. (2002). *Do School Facilities Affect Academic Outcomes?* Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, p. 16.

[288] Jago, E. & Tanner, K. (1999). "Influence of the School Facility on Student Achievement: Lighting; Color", Department of Educational Leadership, University of Georgia, p. 2

[289] Fielding, R. (2006). Learning, Lighting and Color. ERIC document #ED497664, pp. 5-7.

[290] Stevenson, K. (2006). Educational Trends Shaping School Planning and Design. National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, p. 1.

[291] Nair, P. (2002), pp. 3-4.

It has been claimed that the existence of building codes for school design and the lack of a common language mitigates against translating pedagogical design into facilities. As stated by Nair and Fielding, "educational specifications create a school before it is created – design guidelines are too prescriptive (so that architects are often regulated to the role of assembling pieces instead of doing real design)."[292]

2. Design For Learning

It has been argued that the schools of today need to adapt and be flexible so students can pursue their interests. As noted by Westbroek (2000), the trick "is to create a building that can be adapted, which means learning to think in a non-linear way."[293] He went on to say that in the past "school architecture has been internally focused ... today the shift is toward informal learning. Therefore, architects can help both teachers and students to be more creative by giving them well-designed space."

This perception is reinforced by Fielding, who argues that successful schools are "adapting their offerings to learner-centred, rather than teacher or curriculum modes of delivery. The paradigm is no longer about delivering information but nurturing a broad array of learning styles and experiences. ... An effective learning environment in the 21st century has little in common with the rows of classrooms and desks or child factories of the industrial or information ages."[294]

Creating a Building for an Integrated Approach to Teaching and Learning

The school's culture shaped the design of the facility. There are four integrated academic houses, with 100 students per house. Each house is divided into 10 pods, housing individual and teamed efforts.

A centrum within each house can hold all the students at once. Pods are located along the sides of the centrum and each house incorporates a science lab and seminar space. The students each have their own workstation, but they also work on their own time outside of the school.

The classes are themed based; students and teachers take a theme and develop a universal question that in turn drives their curriculum, offers a variety of possible answers, leads to more questions, uses a wealth of resources, and can be measured in relevant tasks. The students also partner with local businesses and groups.

In addition to the theme classes, students have Socratic seminars, which encompass school-wide involvement; foundation skills, which include group processing and research; and inquiry and discovery, which involves problem solving.

Such a curriculum allows students to interact more closely with their community and adds greater meaning to their lessons. In turn, many students are less stressed as they advance to the next stage in their lives.

- Dan Bodette (2000)

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[292] Nair, P. & Fielding, R. (2005). The Language of School Design: Design Patterns for 21st Century Schools, p. 2.

[293] Westbroek. (2000), as quoted in Malone, S. (2000), *Innovative Alternatives in Learning Environments*, CEA Fall Conference Proceedings, p. 7.

[294] Fielding, R. (2006). *Learning, Lighting and Color*. ERIC document #ED497664, p. 2.

While it is generally accepted that school design does influence student learning, it is also recognized that it has an effect on others working in the building. While there are "many researchers, architects, and educational planners who have developed design process plans and theories about what schools should be in practice and what their facilities should have in their physical layout, they have few schools to show for all their thoughts and writings."[295] However, some examples do exist.

For example, the buildings which comprise a Catholic college in Australia (Kindergarten to Grade 12) were "purposefully designed to support effective pedagogies."[296] The school has been divided into four "precincts" early years, junior years, middle years and senior years. Each precinct has a cluster of classrooms surrounding a shaded courtyard. The design allows the classrooms to open to each other as well as opening to the central space. All precincts have wireless and cabled networks. "Each of these rooms has stacking doors or clear roller doors that allow the centre to open up to what is, essentially, one large space that incorporates all of these specialist teaching areas and the central marketplace."[297]

The timetable has been structured to facilitate "connectedness across subject areas." Connectedness is viewed as being important because it has the potential to: "make learning more meaningful, make subjects more interesting because they relate to other fields, ideas and realities; enhance student learning through deeper knowledge and higher order thinking; better use of our facilities, which are purposefully designed around the concept of connectedness; possibly reduce the number of assessment tasks, therefore allowing higher quality work via de-cluttering of the curriculum."[298]

The planning of a new high school in Phoenix became the responsibility of a committee comprised of parents, staff, community members, and business people. Students, parents, and staff were asked to describe their "ideal" high school. During the committee process the director of facilities came to the realization "that the 'old' way of designing a new school wasn't necessarily the best way. I came to realize that it wasn't about me and it wasn't about an easily maintained building. It was about the kids."[299] The school is finished in non-traditional colours and has "pods encompassing six classrooms arranged in a circular fashion around a large shared activity centre ... movable walls separate each of the classrooms, a tangible by-product of the goal of cross-classroom collaboration. Every pod also includes a shared office space for teachers ... the open classrooms and common office and activity areas helped to foster a sense of community. "[300]

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[295] Washor, E. (2003). *Innovative Pedagogy and School Facilities*. DesignShare.com, p. 75.

[296] Chapman, W. (2006). *Architecture, pedagogy, connectedness and convergence: Connecting the curriculum at Assisi College*. Retrieved from http://www.cybertext.net.au/acell11_06/papers/paper21_06.htm, p. 1.

[297] Ibid, p. 2.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Furger, R. (2002). Rebuilding a School: Revitalizing Community. *Edutopia*, Fall 2002, p. 13.

[300] Ibid., p. 14.

There is a need for the schools of today to be designed as integrated systems rather than separated and segregated activity areas. Schools should have flexible spaces where learning is not confined inside of the walls of the school, but also occurs outside of the school in the surrounding community. Establishing close links with the community and providing students with the opportunity to create meaningful links with the community beyond the school is also an important element of school design.

Schools should have a variety of spaces to support learners as they move through the learning process. As stated by Lippman (2003) school design should "have distinct activity systems to afford individual, one-to-one, small group and large group activities, they would not be understood as separating the learning from what occurs between and across settings, but rather as places for extending, reinforcing, and developing knowledge. Each activity setting would have places in which individuals would be able to appropriate knowledge for themselves as well as share their understanding about what they have learned with others."[301]

3. Design Frameworks

The literature suggests a number of conceptual approaches to the design of learning environments. Wolff identifies six categories of design to illustrate the "relationships that provide an optimal collaborative, project-based learning experience. They are :

Structural Aspects which include: flexible spaces, spaces with visible infrastructure, adaptable space, layered spaces, space with durable building materials and finishes, space with core or fixed elements.

Functional Aspects which include: focus library spaces, classroom spaces, presentation spaces, practice spaces, process galleries, studios and display spaces, project space, home base, informal learning space, collaboration incubator.

Adjacencies which include: access to community, adjacent and nested spaces, visibility, **connections** among people and spaces, resource supply, storage spaces, space and furnishings technology.

Furnishings which include: spaces with versatile furnishings, display spaces, spaces with variable lighting.

Psychological/Physiological Support which include: spaces that provide sense of belonging, ownership, and pride, spaces with access to food and beverage, "get away" spaces, zoned spaces, caves, natural light, spaces for transportation support.

Group Size which include: variable size space, individual work space, faculty team spaces[302]

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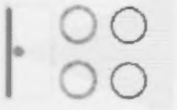
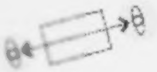
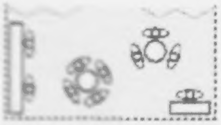
[301] Lipman, P. (2003). *Practice Theory, Pedagogy, and the Design of Learning Environments*. Retrieved from http://www.aia.org/cae_a_20031101_justathough, p. 2.

[302] Wolff, S. (2002). Design Features for Project-Based Learning, p. 59.

According to Wolff, while flexibility and adaptability play a role in the determination of the core elements, "it has been difficult to look beyond the present to the future use and there seemed to be an overwhelming need to 'over design' the spaces rather than allowing users to finalize the process."[303]

As Fisher states when discussing emerging international trends in school planning and design, "there is a willingness to understand what all this means for the transformation of the traditional, industrial-age, teacher-centred "egg-crate classroom" model of schooling, which has prospered for nearly 200 years. It is through high levels of collaboration, consultation and inclusive design processes, where architects learn more about pedagogy and teachers more about design, that a common "spatial literacy" can emerge that will inform the design of future learning environments."[304]

The following table presents Fisher's work in linking spatial settings to pedagogical activities.

Pedagogical Activity*	Pedagogical Attribute	Process Steps	Behavioural Premise	Spatial Icon
Delivering	Formal presentations Instructor controls presentation Focus on presentation Passive learning	Prepare and generate presentation Deliver to an audience Assess understanding	Bring information before the public Instructor lead Knowledge is in one source	
Applying	Controlled observation One-to-one Master and apprentice alternative control Informal Active learning	Knowledge transferred via demonstration Practice by recipient Understanding achieved	Learner – centered Apprentice model	
Creating	Multiple disciplines Leaderless Egalitarian Distributed attention Privacy Casual Active learning	Research Recognize need Divergent thinking Incubate Interpret into product innovation	Innovation or knowledge moved from abstract to a product	

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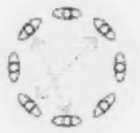
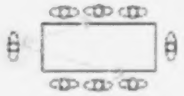
[303] Ibid., p. 48.

[304] Fisher, K. (2007). Pedagogy and Architecture. *Architecture Australia*, 1-4. Retrieved from http://archmedia.com.au/aa/aaissue.php?issueid=200709&article.htm, p. 3.

Pedagogical Activity*	Pedagogical Attribute	Process Steps	Behavioural Premise	Spatial Icon
Communicating	Knowledge is dispersed Impromptu delivery Casual Active learning	Organize information Deliver Receive and interpret Confirm	Share information Provide quick exchange	
Decision Making	Knowledge is dispersed Information is shared Leader sets final direction Situation is protected Semi-formal to Formal Passive / active learning	Review data Generate strategy Plan Implement one course of action	Make decisions	

* Source: Kenn Fisher, "Pedagogy and Architecture," *Architecture Australia*, September/October 2007.

Nair and Fielding suggest "that the design of learning environments is a complex assignment. While the solutions may be simple or elegant, they can almost never be 'simplistic'." In their work they identify "four major and simultaneous realms of human experience – spatial, psychological, physiological, and behavioural."[305] They have also identified attributes related to each.

Realm	Attribute
Spatial	Intimate, Open, Bright, Closed, Active, Quiet, Connected to Nature, Monumental, Technological
Psychological	Soothing, Safe, Awe-Inspiring, Joyful, Playful, Stimulating, Creative, Encouraging Reflection, Spiritually Uplifting, Creating a Sense of Community
Physiological	Warm, Cool, Cozy, Breezy, Healthy, Aromatic, Textured, Visually Pleasing
Behavioural	Independent Study, Collaborative Work, Team Work, Physical Fitness Activity, Research Writing, Computer Work, Singing, Dancing, Performing, Presenting, Large Group Work, Communicating With Nature, Designing, Building, Teaching, Relaxing, Reflecting, Playing

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[305] Nair, P. & Fielding, R. (2005). The Language of School Design: Design Patterns for 21st Century Schools, 1-29. Retrieved from DesignShare.com, p. 7.

The realms are closely connected and their interconnectedness is non-linear. They suggest there are "certain recognizable patterns that define healthy spatial relationships both at the micro and macro level ...the learning environment is actually nothing more than one piece of a larger pattern and good planning requires that each piece be respectful of the overall patterns for communities ... it is really impossible to ignore the larger context in which the learning community is situated."[306]

They identified 25 school design patterns that they believe "represent a fairly complete range of the various design principles that define best practice." These have been listed below.

1. Classrooms, Learning Studios, Advisories and Small Learning Communities
2. Welcoming Entry
3. Student Display Space
4. Home Base and Individual Storage
5. Science Labs, Arts Labs and Life Skills
6. Arts, Music and Performance
7. Physical Fitness
8. Casual Eating Areas
9. Transparency
10. Interior and Exterior Vistas
11. Dispersed Technology
12. Indoor-Outdoor Connection
13. Soft seating
14. Flexible Spaces
15. Campfire Spaces
16. Watering Hole Space
17. Cave Space
18. Design for Multiple Intelligences
19. Daylighting
20. Natural Ventilation
21. Full Spectrum Lighting
22. Sustainable Elements and School as 3D Textbook
23. Local Signature
24. Connected to Community
25. Bringing It All Together

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[306] Nair, P. & Fielding, R. (2005). The Language of School Design: Design Patterns for 21st Century Schools, 1-29. Retrieved from DesignShare.com, p. 8.

Nair and Fielding suggest the results of brain-based research, which has shown that learning is holistic and multi-faceted, means "we are looking at a model where different students (of varying ages) learn different things from different people in different places in different ways and at different times."[307] They go on to identify 18 "learning modalities" and suggest that designing schools with this list in mind will help to estimate the school's ability "to serve 21st century learning needs." The eighteen "learning modalities" are:

1. Independent study
2. Peer tutoring
3. Team collaborative work in small and mid-sized groups (2-6 students)
4. One-on-one learning with the teacher
5. Lecture format with the teacher or outside expert at centre stage
6. Project-based learning
7. Technology-based learning with mobile computers
8. Distance learning
9. Research via the Internet with wireless networking
10. Student presentations
11. Performance and music-based learning
12. Seminar-style instruction
13. Community service learning
14. Naturalist learning
15. Social/emotional learning
16. Art-based learning
17. Storytelling (floor seating)
18. Learning by building (hands-on learning).

As noted by Stevenson, in order to determine how well school facilities will meet the education needs of the 21st century one must ask:

> What is emerging in educational practice that affects the ways we think about schools? How is the demographic composition of our community changing the way education should be delivered? What will taxpayers be willing to support? Can education be delivered in a more efficient, effective manner?[308]

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[307] Nair, P. & Fielding, R. (2005). The Language of School Design: Design Patterns for 21st Century Schools, 1-29. Retrieved from DesignShare.com, p. 19.

[308] Stevenson, K. (2006). Educational Trends Shaping School Planning and Design. National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, p. 2.

F. In Conclusion

Secondary schools need to be welcoming and caring places for students, for parents, for families, and for community. A caring ethos is central to the engagement and success of students. Educators need to consider themselves as first as guests, and then as hosts, in an inclusive school learning community which is designed for the benefit of young people, their families, and their communities. Education must be flexible and ready to serve young people's present and their futures.

Adolescent learners need to be respected and valued as individuals who have strengths, as well as needs, and who are biologically different from adults. Students need to be viewed as individuals who can – and should - play an active role in defining and assessing their own learning. High expectations for success must be held for all students. Authentic, experiential, learning opportunities will engage students and strengthen their connections to their culture, language, spirituality, and community.

While written in the context of Aboriginal education, the broader application is clear:

> Our discussion points to the need for an education system that situates itself at the heart of all forms of advocacy for children, teaching children the value of their voices by respecting those voices rather than attempting to silence them. This can only take place in an organizational atmosphere that understands that schooling is a vehicle for social justice. Their role is only partly intellectual development. They are arenas of justice, personal development, collective action, and individual achievement.[309]

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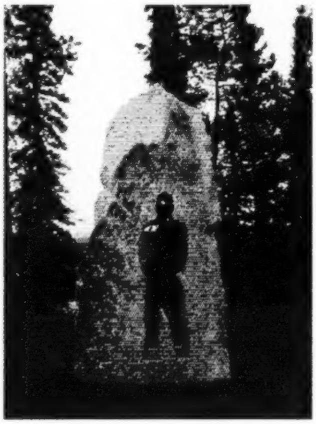

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[309] Wotherspoon, T. & Schissel, B. (1998), p. 14.

CHAPTER 5: PROGRAM INVENTORY

A. Background

This inventory of programs presents information regarding programming to support secondary students in Whitehorse. This includes programs, both curriculum driven and community designed, that may be offered in schools or in other settings in the community. The inventory is organized by first examining secondary school curricula and graduation requirements, followed by information about programs available within schools, student support programs, and in the community-based programming. Information for the inventory was collected from print and electronic sources and through direct contact with schools, community organizations, and representation from Yukon Department of Education.

B. Curricula

As a partner in the Western and Northern Canadian Protocols (WNCP), Government of Yukon adheres to the common curriculum frameworks developed by educational jurisdictions in Western and Northern Canada. Within this framework, curricula in Yukon are based on those used in British Columbia. However, curricula are adapted in order to meet needs and local conditions unique to Yukon.[310]

The British Columbia Ministry of Education curricula are presented in the form of Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs) which include the "basic information needed to implement the curriculum."[311] In addition, IRPs present rational, prescribed learning outcomes, suggested instructional and assessment strategies, and provincially recommended learning resources.[312]

C. Graduation Requirements

1. English Program Certificate

Graduation with a Secondary School Certificate from Yukon requires 80 credits, an equivalency of twenty four-credit courses in Grades 10 though 12. Forty-eight of these are 'required credits'[313] including:

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[310] See http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/psb/curriculum.html.

[311] British Columbia Ministry of Education Skills and Training. (1996). English Language Arts 8 to 10: Integrated Resource Package, III. This document is available at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/ela810.pdf.

[312] Ibid. All IRPs are available electronically at http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/irp.htm.

[313] A minimum of 4 credits is required in each of these areas.

- Language Arts 10,* 11, 12*
- Social Studies 10,
- Social Studies11,* Canadian Civics 11,* or Yukon First Nations Studies 12*
- Science 10*
- a Science 11 or 12
- a Mathematics 10*
- a Mathematics 11 or 12
- Physical Education 10
- A Fine Arts and/or Applied Skills 10, 11, or 12
- Planning 10

** These courses have a required examination.*

In addition, 28 credits in elective courses are required for a Certificate. Graduation Transitions is a requirement. As well, graduation requirements include a minimum of 16 credits at the Grade 12 level and successful completion of Language Arts 12.[314]

2. French Immersion Program Certificate

Similarly to the English Program Certificate, a certificate in French Immersion requires a total of 80 credits in Grades 10 through 12, of which 28 are the same required credits as those listed above, in Language Arts, Social Studies and Science. In addition, the student must successfully complete 28 credits in electives. Like their counterparts in the English program, French Immersion graduates must accumulate 16 credits at the Grade 12 level, including 4 credits in Language Arts 12, and 4 credits in for Graduation Portfolio.

A French Immersion certificate further requires students to be successful in three French Immersion courses in Grades 11 and 12, including Français Langue 11 and Français Langue 12, as well as one other course in French at the Grade 11 or 12 level.[315]

D. School-Based Programming

There are four secondary schools in Whitehorse. F.H. Collins Secondary School, Porter Creek Secondary School, and Vanier Catholic Secondary School offer programming in English, while F.H. Collins houses a French Immersion stream. École Émilie-Tremblay provides Français programming to French first language students under the auspices of the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. In addition, the Individual Learning Centre is an alternative centre to provide adult and secondary graduation to students who have left regular school.

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[314] Yukon Education. (2007). *Handbook for Yukon Teachers*, p. 45.

[315] F.H. Collins Secondary School. (2007/2008). *Course Planning and Program Description Handbook*, p. 5.

Other institutions provide curriculum-based programming to secondary students in Whitehorse, although they do not graduate students. This includes the Wood Street Centre which offers experiential programming in sciences/outdoor education and theatre arts, while the Teen Parent Centre supports pregnant and young mothers.[316]

1. École Émilie-Tremblay

While École Émilie-Tremblay welcomes students from Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12, secondary education at the school is organized into three groupings of Grades 7/8, Grades 9/10 and Grades 11/12 with a total enrolment of 17 students.[317] The 2007/2008 school year is the first year of a five year pilot project revitalizing secondary education at École Émilie-Tremblay. Known as l'Académie Parhélie, secondary programming at the school is based on an experiential model where virtually all traditional subject areas are integrated through project-based work.

L'Académie Parhélie is based on five orientations, each including two objectives:

- Apprentissage et autonomie: Développer la responsabilité de l'élève face à son apprentissage. Augmenter la qualité du français des élèves.
- Saines habitudes de vie: Initier l'élève au processus de la prise de décision. Conscientiser l'élève aux effets de la forme physique par rapport au mental.
- Développement durable: Conscientisation de l'élève face à sa consommation de biens. Développer des connaissances et stratégies face aux ressources renouvelables et non renouvelables.
- Volet communautaire: Engager l'élève à participer au bien-être de sa communauté. Développer un sentiment d'appartenance à sa communauté (de l'école à l'international).
- Créativité: Découvrir et reconnaître son potentiel créateur. Explorer de nouvelles applications de ses apprentissages.[318]

These principles allow students to move away from traditional school settings through integrated arts and outdoor education trips. Leadership, personal and social responsibility, as well as community partnership and volunteerism are also important aspects of integrative experiential programming. Social studies are the basis for integration which includes work in Français, Sciences, Physical Education, Outdoor Education, Fine Arts,[319] Practical Arts,[320] and English Language Arts. Service learning through community volunteerism is also required in Grades 7 through 11. In Grade 12, students undertake a personal integrated project where they are encouraged to shape their future, develop their interests and a connection to the world around them, deepen understandings and skills, and responsibly participate in an interdependent world.[321]

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[316] References to program fees are made where they apply. If there is no reference to fees, it is assumed that these programs are provided free to Yukon secondary students.

[317] Yukon Education. (2008). *Enrolment by School and Grade*.

[318] See http://eet.csfy.ca/fr/70.

[319] Fine arts include visual arts, dance, theatre, music and film. See http://eet.csfy.ca/vm/newvisual/attachments/771/documents/disciplines.pdf.

Finally, as a French first language program, École Émilie-Tremblay provides opportunities for student to live within their cultural identity, while exploring relationships with the immediate and global community.

2. F.H. Collins Secondary School

According to Government of Yukon information dated December 31, 2007, a total of 616 students attend F.H. Collins Secondary School, 463 of whom are enrolled in the English Program. Course offerings include English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Business Education, Fine Arts, Technology Education, Physical Education and Leadership, and Languages.[322] All students at F.H. Collins Secondary School pay a $25.00 school fee.

Students at F.H. Collins can access language programming in French, Spanish, and Athapaskan Languages.[323] The Core French program is French as a second language program for students enrolled in English language programming. While not intended to produce fluency, the Core French program "provides students [enrolled in English language programming] the opportunity to attain a level of comprehension of the language which will allow them to read, write and converse in French in simple terms."[324] Core French and Gwich'in are available throughout secondary school, while Spanish and Southern Tutchone are offered in Grades 10 through 12.[325]

Approximately one quarter of students enrolled at F.H. Collins Secondary School attend the French Immersion Program. At F.H. Collins, Français, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies are provided in French in order that "students can

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[320] Practical arts include photography, videography, multimedia, technology, and foods. See http://eet.csfy.ca/vm/newvisual/attachments/771/documents/disciplines.pdf

[321] See http://eet.csfy.ca/fr/Programme_46.html.

[322] See http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/schools/fhcollins/about.html.

[323] Council of Yukon First Nations. (n.d.) *Community Education Resource Guide*, p.5. Courses in Athapaskan offered at both F.H Collins and Porter Creek Secondary Schools are taught in conjunction with the Yukon Native Language Centre at Yukon College.

[324] Yukon Education. (2007). *Handbook for Yukon Teachers*, p. 27.

[325] F.H. Collins Secondary School. (2007/2008). *Course Planning and Program Description Handbook*, pp 39-41

continue to improve their language skills." The French Immersion program is intended for students whose first language is not French, but who wish to pursue a second language. A more language-rich course of study than Core French, French Immersion is intended "to develop high functional competencies in French."[326] At the secondary level, students must complete six courses in French, including Français 10 through 12 and three other courses in Mathematics or social studies.

Fine Arts programming at F.H. Collins includes courses in general visual arts, photography, drawing and painting, ceramics and sculpture, film and television. Music offerings centre on band and instrumental jazz options for students in Grades 9 through 12. Some of these options are offered outside of regular school hours. Practical Arts are also available and include courses in food studies and culinary arts as well as family studies.

Within Technology Education, F.H. Collins offers courses in: drafting and design; information and communication technology; power mechanics and automotive technology; woodworking, carpentry and joinery; and metalwork and machining.[327] Business Education includes courses in accounting, computer applications and information management, as well as tourism and entrepreneurship.[328] Power mechanics and automotive technology can also be accessed by students attending Porter Creek and Vanier Catholic Secondary Schools.

The Food Education and Services Training (FEAST) is housed at F.H. Collins. FEAST is a program where students prepare for a career in the food service industry. Taught within an industrial kitchen, Grade 11 and 12 students prepare the foods daily that are served at F.H. Collins at morning break and at lunch. Students may also enroll in FEAST for one semester per year and continue with other areas of study (including WELS and FLEX) during the other semester.[329]

Furthermore, F.H. Collins also offers a number of special programs, referred to as 'school-within-a-school' options. Some such options are presented at the F.H. Collins location, while others occur off-campus at the Wood Street Centre. Students from other Yukon secondary schools can also access these options.

Students can participate in specialized programming in partnership with the Wood Street Centre. These include Outdoor Pursuits Experiential Sciences (OPES) and Plein air et sciences experientielles (PASE), Achievement Challenge Environment Service (ACES), Experiential Sciences (ES), and Music Art Drama and Dance

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[326] Yukon Education. (2007). *Handbook for Yukon Teachers*, p. 27.

[327] F.H. Collins Secondary School. (2007/2008). *Course Planning and Program Description Handbook*, pp 49-56.

[328] Ibid.,pp. 57-58.

[329] F.H. Collins Secondary School. (2007/2008). *Course Planning and Program Description Handbook*, p. 64.

(MAD).[330] These programs focus on experiential learning and fine arts. Yukon secondary students attend these programs at Wood Street for a given semester.

The Work Experience Life Skills Program (WELS)[331] is offered at F.H. Collins Secondary School for students functioning significantly below what is needed for regular programs, but who do not meet departmental Shared Resource criteria. WELS focuses on functional literacy and numeracy, while modifications, continuous progress, and hands-on learning help meet the individual needs of students. All students in this program have Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

In addition to functional academics, life skills are acquired through pre-employment skills and job placements. Students who complete a WELS program receive a School Leaving Certificate and not a Yukon Graduation Certificate.[332]

3. Individual Learning Centre

Individual
Learning Center

Located in downtown Whitehorse, the Individual Learning Centre is an alternative setting for youth aged 15 to 21 who have been out of school for at least one semester.[333] The Individual Learning Centre "focuses on learners who have had a history of difficulties in the regular school program," "provides self-paced programming with one-on-one teacher assistance," and both diploma and G.E.D. services.[334] Currently, over 100 students are active at the Individual Learning Centre, with several on a waiting list. The ILC seeks to foster positive experiences for students in a safe and supportive environment.

Both regular and modified courses for student Grades 9 to 12 are available including: Grade 9 English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies; Grade 10 English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Foods, and Planning; Grade 11 English, Communications, Mathematics, Earth Science, Psychology, Social Studies, Civic Studies, Foods and Business Computer Applications; and, Grade 12 English, Communications, Technical and Professional Communications, Math Essentials, Geography, Law, Comparative Civilizations, British Columbia First Nations Studies, Economics, and Data Management. Pre-employment and career placement, work education, cooperative education, and apprenticeship programs are also available at the Individual Learning Centre.

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[330] Information on each of these special programs is available under section 4 below or at http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/schools/fhcollins/index.html.

[331] As of September 2008 this program will be renamed "Transitions."

[332] F.H. Collins Secondary School. (2007/2008). *Course Planning and Program Description Handbook*, p. 10.

[333] Yukon Education. (2007). *Handbook for Yukon Teachers*, p. 23.

[334] See http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/schools/individual_lc/focus.html.

Course work at the Individual Learning Centre is based on the ProActive Curriculum,[335] an alternative education approach for graduation. ProActive provides a skeletal curriculum based on British Columbia IRPs while also being self-paced and mastery-based. The use of this curriculum allows for flexible programming for students who require adaptations of time, setting, and structure.

4. Porter Creek Secondary School

With an enrolment of 643 students,[336] Porter Creek Secondary School offers English language programming in Mathematics, Sciences, Social Studies, English Language Arts, Physical Education, Applied Arts, as well as Music and Theatre Arts. In addition, Porter Creek offers opportunities for second language programming, 'school within a school' options and shared experiential programming with the Wood Street Centre. A $25.00 school fee is assessed to all Porter Creek students.

In addition to core French studies, Porter Creek students may also take courses in Athapaskan (Southern Tutchone), German and Spanish in Grades 10 through 12.[337]

Business Education, Home Economics, and Technology Education are also offered at Porter Creek. Business Education includes accounting, computer technology, entrepreneurship, marketing, and tourism. Home Economics includes foods, family studies, and textiles components. Technology education includes carpentry and joinery, drafting and design, metal fabrication and machinery, information technology and digital design. In addition, Porter Creek students can access automotive technology courses at F.H. Collins Secondary School in Grades 11 and 12.[338]

Porter Creek also offers a school-based apprenticeship program. The goal of the Apprenticeship Carpentry Program is to "provide students with the knowledge and practical skills to enable them to enter the field of carpentry as capable apprentices. At the end of grade twelve, students can challenge the carpentry apprenticeship level 1 exam."[339]

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[335] The ProActive curriculum is not affiliated with Proactive Information Services Inc., the social research company undertaking this review.

[336] Yukon Education. (2008). *Enrolment by School and Grade.*

[337] Porter Creek Secondary School (2008/2009). *Course Planning and Program Description Handbook*, pp. 22-23.

[338] Ibid., pp. 28-35.

[339] Ibid., p. 43.

Courses in Theatre Arts, offered in Grades 10 through 12, include film and television as well as acting. Music offerings range from general music, concert band, concert choir, guitar and composition and technology. Rehearsal times for some band and general music courses occur outside regular school hours. Furthermore, some out-of-school-time rehearsals share space with F.H. Collins Secondary School.[340]

Experiential learning programs are available to students from Porter Creek Secondary School at the Wood Street Centre, including ACES, Experiential Science, and MAD. In addition, Porter Creek Students can also enroll in Science and Social Studies Experiential 9 (SASE 9), an experiential program that "offers students discrete instruction in Science and Social Studies, but then extends the learning of these concepts through Physical Education. . . . The integrated model offers students the opportunity to master and apply the concepts and skills in the humanities and science to a variety of situations and problems tackled during the project portion of the program."[341] This integrated experiential program is offered during a given semester, and requires students to take English, Mathematics, and a second language in the alternate semester. Like all other experiential courses, SASE 9 has a cost of $260.00 per student.

Essential Skills Development[342] (ESD) is a school-based life skills program designed for students who experienced "significant difficulties in the regular school academic environment,"[343] and are following Individual Education Plans (IEPs). (This program is known as WELS at F. H. Collins Secondary School.) In keeping with the purpose of IEPs, there is an emphasis on meeting the individual needs, of students and continuous progress through a variety of strategies and methods. ESD students are integrated into other courses of study wherever possible. In addition to "functional academics,"[344] life skills are acquired through pre-employment skills and job placements. Like the WELS program at F.H. Collins, ESD students receive a School Leaving Certificate and not a Yukon Graduation Certificate.

Finally, Porter Creek Secondary School offers First Nations Arts and Culture to all students in Grades 8 through 10. A new course in Yukon First Nations 12 is being offered for the first time in 2007/2008.[345]

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[340] Ibid., pp. 38-41.

[341] Porter Creek Secondary School (2008/2009). *Course Planning and Program Description Handbook*, pp. 43.

[342] As of September 2008 this program will be renamed "Essentials."

[343] Porter Creek Secondary School. (2008/2009). *Course Planning and Program Description Handbook*. P. 8.

[344] Ibid.

[345] Porter Creek Secondary School. (2007). *School Plan Summary*, p. 8.

5. Vanier Catholic Secondary School

Vanier Catholic Secondary School offers secondary programming in a Catholic environment to 440 students.[346] In addition to courses in English Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, Physical and Outdoor Education, Vanier offers programming in Languages, Fine Arts, Applied Arts and Religious Studies. Like all other Whitehorse secondary schools, students attending Vanier Catholic Secondary School can access experiential programs at the Wood Street Centre. A school fee of $25.00 per student is assessed to each student (or $50.00 for a family with more than two students attending) to cover the cost of agendas, special events and project materials.[347]

Religious education is mandatory at all levels at Vanier Catholic Secondary School and an integral part of school life. Course offerings in Religious Studies are developmental from Grades 8 through 12 and are described as Trinitarian and based on scripture and life experience. Finally, programming is "presented within the tradition of a Catholic family community," and includes a volunteer/community service component.[348] A religious education fee of $25.00 per student (or $45.00 per family with two or more students attending Whitehorse Catholic schools) is required as a contribution toward material, resources and activities associated with the religious education program.[349]

Modern languages studies are available at Vanier Catholic Secondary School. In addition to Core French in (Grades 8 through 12), Vanier offers Extended French in Grade 10 to students who wish to pursue further studies in French. Extended French students also take Social Studies in French.[350] Spanish is offered in Grades 10 and 11.

Students entering Vanier Catholic Secondary School in Grade 8 can choose between music and fine art programming. Instrumental music includes band and jazz band, while choral and music composition courses are also available. Fine Arts programming include visual and graphic arts, as well as photography. Drama is offered in Grades 8 and 9.[351] Some of these options are offered outside of regular school hours.

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[346] Yukon Education. (2008). Enrolment by School and Grade.
[44] Council of Yukon First Nations. (n.d.) *Community Education Resource Guide*, p. 19.
[348] Vanier Catholic Secondary School. (2008/2009). *Course Information Booklet*, p. 28.
[349] Council of Yukon First Nations. (n.d.) *Community Education Resource Guide*, p. 19.
[350] Yukon Education. (2007). *Handbook for Yukon Teachers*, p. 27.
[351] Vanier Catholic Secondary School. (2008/2009). *Course Information Booklet*, pp. 35-38.

pplied arts offerings at Vanier Catholic Secondary School include Information Technology, Home Economics, Food and Textiles, Industrial Arts, Woodworking and Carpentry, Metalworking, Industrial Design, and Financial Literacy.[352] Finally, the Mechanics (Small Engine or "Sled Ed") course at Vanier incorporates aspects of applied arts and experiential learning. In addition to learning about small engine repair in the school's shop, there is an outdoor education component which emphasizes snowmobile and avalanche safety as well as winter camping.

6. Wood Street Centre

Several experiential learning programs are offered at the Wood Street Centre, including Outdoor Pursuits and Experiential Sciences (OPES) and Plein air et sciences experientielles (PASE) for Grade 9 students registered at F.H. Collins Secondary School. Achievement Challenge Environment Services (ACES) for Grade 10 students, Experiential Sciences for students in Grade 11, and Music Art Drama and Dance (MAD) are available to Yukon secondary students in Grades 10 through 12. The Wood Street Centre is administratively supported by the principal of F.H. Collins Secondary School.

Outdoor Pursuits and Experiential Science (OPES) is offered at Wood Street for students in Grade 9 from F.H. Collins. Experiential outdoor pursuits are intended to enrich science and social studies curricular learning. Both in and out of the classroom, OPES also incorporates technology and fine arts within this integrated program.[353] Plein air et sciences experientielles (PASE) is an integrated experiential sciences program for French Immersion students delivered at the Wood Street Centre. Like its English language counterpart OPES, PASE allows Grade 9 students to integrate science, social studies, physical education, and outdoor pursuits with challenging out-of-classroom experiences which are intended to foster personal growth, team-building, and leadership.[354] There is a cost of $250.00 per student/per semester for both OPES and PASE.

The ACES program is also available at the Wood Street Centre. ACES welcomes students of "grade ten academic ability"[355] from a number of secondary schools in Whitehorse and rural areas. Originally designed as a "Stay In School" Initiative, the ACES course includes:

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[352] Vanier Catholic Secondary School. (2008/2009). *Course Information Booklet.*, pp. 39-42.
[353] See http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/schools/fhcollins/opes.html.
[354] Yukon Education. (2007). *Handbook for Yukon Teachers*, p. 21.
[355] See http://yesnet.yk.ca/schools/woodst/aces/philosophy.html.

- Social Studies 10 with the themes of current affairs, economics and geography;
- Science 10 which focuses on both life and physical sciences, including chemistry, earth science;
- Outdoor Pursuits where hiking/snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, biking, and canoeing are combined with Leave No Trace skills to foster outdoor leadership skills;
- Physical Education 10 where daily physical activities will combine fitness with outdoor pursuits; and
- Applied Skills gives students experiences with hands-on activities such as carpentry, metal-work, photography, sewing, and hunter ethics and education.

Within a program of experiential learning, ACES provides students with both in-school and out-of-school opportunities for "personal growth through challenging experiences" that include curricular content in geography and history. In addition, ACES seeks to support students' self confidence and growth as responsible citizens. ACES students are expected to commit at least 25 days per semester for outdoor expeditions, at times in remote settings. Personal, environmental, social/emotional, and cultural learnings are intended to prepare students to "meet the many challenges of a rapidly changing society." The cost of ACES is $150.00 per student/per term. There is also an optional cost of $20.00 per student for a notebook.

The Experiential Sciences 11 (ES11) integrates project-based classroom study with field experiences to provide students with opportunities to grow intellectually, physically, socially/emotionally, and culturally. Intended for Grade 11 students, ES11 focuses on the sciences and includes Biology 11, Resource Science 11, Chemistry 11, Art 11, and Field Methods 11. Experiential Science 11 includes 30 to 35 days of field study as well as two days per week in science labs at Yukon College.[356] Field study includes data collection and resource management, while analysis is centered on current resource issues. There is a cost of $500.00 for participation in Experiential Science and an addition cost of $20.00 for a geography book.

Admission to experiential programs in outdoor education and science, including OPES, PASE, ACES, and ES11 is by application. Applications for OPES and PASE are forwarded to the F.H. Collins school counselors who ensure students have passed their previous years courses and have attended regularly. Following the completion of an application, ACES and ES11 applicants are interviewed and input is gathered from the students' home school. A scoring system, where staff rank students, is utilized. Spaces are limited, so only those students with the highest scores are admitted.

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[356] See http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/schools/woodst/experiential/index.html.

Finally, the Wood Street Centre offers an integrated arts program entitled Music Art Drama and Dance (MAD) for students in grades 9 through 12. This program intends to provide students with a foundation in the performing arts including creative dramatics, acting, stagecraft, music, dance, and play writing.[357] There is no cost for MAD in Grades 9 and 10, although a fee of $284.00 is collected per year for each student in Grades 11 and 12. Access to MAD is through a three step admission involving completion and presentation of a poster assignment, parent and individual meetings, as well as attending a day at MAD. The program can accommodate a limited number of students.

[redacted]

7. Yukon Secondary School Apprenticeship Training

The Yukon Secondary School Apprenticeship Training provides secondary students with a means to explore skilled trades while at high school. Students working at a trade during the school year or over the summer can register as an apprentice and receive credit for their trade experience. Upon secondary school completion or should the student not return to school for a semester, students can convert to a regular apprenticeship training schedule to continue on-the-job training as well as in-school training as a regular apprentice. Thus Yukon Secondary School Apprenticeship Training makes it possible for students to gain credit for trade training outside of school while completing secondary education.[358]

E. Special Programs

Under the umbrella of "Special Programs," services are provided to "teachers in developing and supporting programs and services for students with special needs to facilitate opportunities to function to the best of their abilities."[359] These include department-based and school-based services, shared resource services, and learning assistance.

1. Department-Based Services

Some services offered under Special Programs are department-based and available to educators throughout the territory. Special Programs' consultants support school personnel to develop programs to foster the success of students with special needs.

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[357] See http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/schools/fhcollins/mad.html.

[358] See http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/advanced/apprenticeship.yssap.html.

[359] Yukon Education. (2007). *Handbook for Yukon Teachers*, p. 29.

In addition to a Coordinator and Special Education Consultant, Special Programs consultants include Speech Language Pathologists, School Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, and Itinerant Teachers for students who are deaf/hard of hearing and blind/visually impaired. Finally, Department-based services include a Coordinator for the Wilson Reading program. This program helps struggling readers in a systematic and cumulative way using a multi-sensory approach.

2. Shared Resource Services

Yukon Department of Education provides several specialized, low enrolment resource programs for students with very specific needs. These programs are housed at certain schools, although students from any school in Whitehorse can attend, regardless of catchment area. Admittance to these programs is governed by criteria set by the Shared Resource Committee.

Life Skills programs serve the needs of students with "physical and intellectual challenges which make programming for them a challenge."[360] Skills developed in these programs include interpersonal, communication, social, and vocational skills, as well as practical skills such as money and time management, personal safety, listening, problem-solving and motor skills.[361] Three Shared Resource Life Skills programs operate in Whitehorse secondary schools including "Room 1" at Vanier Catholic Secondary School, Porter Creeks "Life Skills" program, and the Far Reaching Life Experiences (FLEX) at F. H. Collins Secondary School. Furthermore, secondary students with "severe and/or multiple disabilities" can access the Multi-needs program at F.H. Collins Secondary School as a Shared Resource Program.[362]

The **Riverfront** program supports youth with severe behavioural issues. All Whitehorse secondary schools refer students to Riverfront, although the program is administered by Vanier Catholic Secondary School and operates as a Shared Resource program. Riverfront provides youth with all curricular subjects for Grades 8 through 12, although much of the programming is individualized to the needs of students. Self-directed modules developed for distance education provide a vehicle for individualization. Life and employment skills, social responsibility and job placements are also offered to Riverfront students. Finally, Riverfront seeks to partner with other community and school-based resources and programs, such as the Youth Achievement Centre and the Sundog Carving Retreat.

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[360] Yukon Education. (2007). *Handbook for Yukon Teachers*, p. 31.

[361] F.H. Collins Secondary School. (2007/2008). *Course Planning and Program Description Handbook*, p. 11. and Porter Creek Secondary School. (2008/2009). *Course Planning and Program Description Handbook*. P. 8

[362] Yukon Education. (2007). *Handbook for Yukon Teachers*, p. 31.

3. School-Based Services

In addition to department-based services, school-based teams operate within each secondary school in Yukon to support students' learning and behaviour within the regular classroom. School-based teams usually include learning support teachers, counselors, classroom teachers, and administrators, and may include CELCs and parents as well. Special Programs Consultants may also be invited to participate on school-based teams.

4. Learning Assistance

F. H. Collins, Porter Creek and Vanier Catholic Secondary Schools have Learning Assistance (LA) programs where students can receive one-on-one and small group instruction to assist them in achieving school success. Help with literacy, numeracy, study, and organizational skills as well as assignment completion is available. Because Porter Creek and Vanier Secondary Schools do not have specific English as a Second Language programs, ESL students can be supported in the Learning Assistance program.[363]

Students access Learning Assistance through teacher, parent, or self-referral. In addition to referral information, assessment is undertaken by LA staff in order to meet students' needs.[364] While some students may need short-term assistance, others "have a regularly scheduled block of learning assistance in place of another subject."[365] While staff are assigned to Learning Assistance programs, F.H. Collins[366] and Vanier Catholic Secondary School also provide peer tutoring.

F. Student Support Services

1. Community Education Liaison Coordinators/Education Support Workers

Community Education Liaison Coordinators (CELCs)/Education Support Workers (ESWs) work with First Nations students to support student success. They act as a liaison and support to students coming from communities to Whitehorse, and provide a bridge to ease transitions between First Nations communities and larger community of Whitehorse; as well as supporting First Nations in community schools.

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[363] Porter Creek Secondary School. (2008/2009). *Course Planning and Program Description Handbook*. P. 7.

[364] Ibid.

[365] F.H. Collins Secondary School. (2007/2008). *Course Planning and Program Description Handbook*, p. 10.

[366] Peer tutor at F.H. Collins work in environments other than the Learning Assistance Room. Some tutors are remunerated, while others are not; some receive high school credit, while others do not.

Currently, there are two CELCs/ESWs located at F.H. Collins Secondary School and two[367] housed at Porter Creek Secondary School.[368] Employed by a First Nation, CELCs/ESWs provide a wide variety of supports for students, such as career counseling, help in finding job training opportunities. As well, the will arrange tutoring, life skills training, and Yukon First Nations cultural activities within schools. In addition, they play a role in providing a cultural presence within schools, linking students with school and community resources.

2. English as a Second Language (ESL)

The arrival of New Canadian families in the Whitehorse area has prompted a need for English as a Second Language[369] programming in secondary schools. Secondary students whose first language is neither English nor French are supported in all Whitehorse secondary schools through Learning Assistance, although they can also attend an ESL classroom at F.H. Collins Secondary School. The goal of this program is to assist students in acquiring sufficient proficiency in English for integration into regular school programming.

3. Gadzoosdaa Residence

Although communities in Yukon have their own schools, several do not accommodate secondary students. These students may travel to Whitehorse to attend secondary school. While in Whitehorse, students can live at the Gadzoosdaa Residence. Accomodating up to 38 male and female residents, Gadzoosdaa provides a number of supports to students, including daily compulsory study time at the residence. Tutors are also arranged, and students at Gadzoosdaa can also have access to peer tutors. In addition, Residence staff facilitate students accessing services at the schools they are attending including Community Education Liaison Coordinators (CELCs)/Education Support Workers (ESWs), counselling, and Learning Assistance.

Should students not access Gadzoosdaa Residence, living subsides are provided to families from specific communities who seek private accommodation for students attending Whitehorse secondary schools.

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[367] At times there can be three CELCs working at Porter Creek Secondary School, depending on First Nations ability to hire. Other CELCs may travel in from communities to connect with particular students.

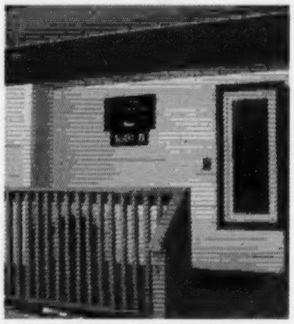
[368] Council of Yukon First Nations. (n.d.) *Community Education Resource Guide*, p. 3.

[369] English as a Second Language (ESL) is known in some jurisdictions as English as an Additional Language (EAL).

4. Positive Alternative to Suspension

All Whitehorse secondary schools provide for in-school suspension as a way of dealing with specific issues while keeping student at school. However, F.H. Collins Secondary School has a dedicated space, Positive Alternative to Suspension, available to students who would otherwise not attend school through suspension. Individual tutoring and counselling are available to meet students' needs and help them stay connected to school.

5. Teen Parent Centre



The Teen Parent Centre, associated with F. H. Collins Secondary School, "provides a supportive environment to assist young parents so they can finish high school."[370] The Centre is focused on service provision based on the individual needs of the students and their young families. The Centre is governed by a board with multiple partners: "the Department of Education in conjunction with the Teen Parent Access to Education society operates [this] educational and daycare facility...."[371] Representation from the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Education, the administration of F.H. Collins Secondary School, and the Teen Parent Access to Education Society is included in the Four Corners Partnership Committee which operates and monitors the Teen Parent Centre.[372]

Students at the Teen Parent Centre can take courses at F.H. Collins Secondary school or can pursue courses at the Centre, often through correspondence. Tutoring and remedial support are also available. Although adjacent to F.H. Collins Secondary School, students from other Whitehorse secondary schools can attend the Teen Parent Centre. The Teen Parent Centre also provides a variety of services and supports to student parents. These include courses in child development, relationship and financial counseling, prenatal and breastfeeding support, as well as nutrition and food preparation. The centre also includes a daycare facility. A staff registered nurse, public health nurses, and public health nutritionists support teen parents in the Centre in a variety of capacities by providing the Healthy Moms/Healthy Babies program[373] and a community kitchen. The Centre also provides daily breakfast and lunch for expectant mothers, as well as for mothers and their children.

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[370] Yukon Education. (2007). *Handbook for Yukon Teachers*, p. 23.
[371] Memorandum of Agreement; Teen Parent Centre 2005-2008, p. 1.
[372] Ibid.
[373] Funded through the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program.

G. Examples of Community Resources

The following discussion presents some examples of community resources. These are included because the consultants were referred to these organizations/programs through the interview process. It is recognized that this does not represent a comprehensive list of community resources that support – or have the potential to support – secondary students. However, they are included because they are examples of the variety of potential partners available to Whitehorse secondary schools.

1. Autism Yukon

As a community-based non-profit organization, Autism Yukon seeks to "provide support, public awareness, training, advocacy, and resources"[374] about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) for individuals, families, and the community. Autism Yukon fulfills its mandate by providing education, training, and professional development opportunities for school staff as well as families. This organization also provides resources regarding ASD, including *Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Yukon Guide to Services.*[375] In addition, Autism Yukon helps bridge home and school programming in Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA).

2. Bringing Youth Toward Equality (BYTE)

BYTE is a youth-run, non-profit organization with a mandate of strengthening youth voice with a view for positive social change: "B.Y.T.E. seeks to bring about positive change by promoting social consciousness towards: youth culture, human rights, the environment, racism, violence, substance abuse, homelessness, spirituality, sexuality and politics."[376]

BYTE provides a number of opportunities for youth aged 12 to 29, including camps, art contests, environmental programs, and a youth conference. In addition, through its services and publications, BYTE seeks to connect youth to community resources.

3. Dream Catcher Yukon

Dream Catcher Yukon matches youth with a one-on-one career mentor who provides opportunities to "give students the confidence, skills, and drive to create attainable goals, complete their education, and work towards their dreams and aspirations."[377] Bridging geographic divides through the use of digital technology, Dream Catcher pairs young people with a Canadian mentor in their aspired career field.

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[374] See http://autismyukon.org/index.html.
[375] Ibid.
[376] See http://yukonyouth.com/about/.
[377] See http://www.dreamcatcheryukon.ca/about_overview2.cfm.

Furthermore, Dream Catcher emphasizes First Nations values by including the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional spheres in its work. While the focus of Dream Catcher's efforts is on rural communities, students from Vanier Catholic Secondary School have participated. By providing long term mentoring, Dream Catcher seeks to empower students and support their efforts to stay in school and realize their dreams.

4. Innovators in the Schools

As part of the Actua national network, Innovators in the Schools supports science and technology learning in Yukon schools. Innovators in the Schools links teachers with volunteer science professionals who provide classroom visits on a variety of science and technology topics. In addition, Innovators in the Schools provides field trip opportunities, science fairs and resource materials. Although mostly focussed on younger students, Innovators in the Schools offers a Science Olympics program for Grade 8 students, as well as supporting specific science-related activities in secondary schools, such as scientists speaking to students.

5. Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon

The Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon supports individuals and families impacted by learning disabilities. In partnership with schools, the Association provides supports for students with learning disabilities including tutors, camps, and leadership opportunities. They have also supported professional development opportunities for school staff.

6. Royal Canadian Mounted Police Young Riders

The Young Riders program brings youth and law enforcement officers together for recreational activities, such as skiing/snowboarding and white water rafting. Intending to engage youth and police in non-threatening environments/situations, Young Riders seeks to build relationships and to change youth perception of police. While not an educational or employment skills program, Young Riders provides ways in which youth can positively connect within the community, which, in turn, can facilitate education and employment and is accessed by students with special needs.

7. Skills Canada Yukon

Through skill development workshops, skill clubs, and skill competitions, Skills Canada Yukon promotes trades and technology career options to youth.[378] This non-profit organization currently offers over 30 extra-curricular Skills Clubs where students can gain technical knowledge from volunteer professionals working in a given industry.

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[378] Council of Yukon First Nations. (n.d.) *Community Education Resource Guide*, p. 32.

Skills Clubs are structured to provide enhanced educational opportunities for youth who have the desire to pursue an interest in vocational skills. In many cases, these opportunities are not available to them through the traditional academic curriculum offered at secondary schools. Conflicts in scheduling and the pressure to enroll in academic courses create barriers to many students wanting to pursue vocational training.[379]

Skills Canada Yukon works in partnership with education to provide opportunities and promote possibilities for youth in the skilled trades. Clubs include a diverse cross section of professions from aesthetics to carpentry, and culinary arts to precision machining and run during the weekday, evenings, and weekends. In addition to providing programming at their own location, Skills Canada Yukon has partnered with Yukon College.

8. Skookum Jim Friendship Centre

As a traditional house, Skookum Jim offers supports and services based on "traditional teachings, education and recovery, culturally relevant teachings, as well education, training and support.[380] Skookum Jim seeks to foster success for First Nations youth through tutoring and career planning, as well as other social and family supports.

9. Sundog Carving Retreat

Located in downtown Whitehorse, Sundog Carving Retreat offers youth an opportunity to learn traditional carving and life skills. Two levels of programming, beginner and advanced, are presented, with those in the advanced programming acting as teachers/mentors to the younger students. In addition, advanced students receive support in business skills, with each student having a business plan.

Students from schools in Whitehorse can access the program. With an emphasis on one-on-one instruction, as well as traditional First Nations teaching, Sundog seeks to encourage talented youth to become self-sufficient as carvers.

10. Young Offenders Facility (Youth Justice)

Educational services are provided to youth aged 12 to 18 who are currently in the youth correctional facility. Youth have access to educational programming tailored to individual need. The teacher at this facility is provided by the Department of Education and is overseen by the Principal of Vanier Catholic Secondary School.

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[379] See http://www.skillsyukon.com/clubs/clubs.html

[380] Council of Yukon First Nations. (n.d.) *Community Education Resource Guide*, p. 26.

These students have a wide range of needs, many have not attended school regularly and may have significant gaps in learning. Students are assessed upon arrival, at times in partnership with Yukon College. Programming is based on an alternative education model, to assist students who have not been successful in other educational settings.

11. Youth Achievement Centre (YAC)

Supporting youth at risk and those involved with the justice system, the Youth Achievement Centre assists students who have been out of school through personalized learning and tutoring through Education Outreach. The Youth Achievement Centre, under the jurisdiction of Health and Social Services, supports students who have achieved little academic success in other environments. In addition to providing individualized learning, YAC offers life skills, opportunities for experiential learning, and flexible scheduling. Lastly, learning, recreation activities, work skills and anger management at the Youth Achievement Centre (YAC) "help youth become employable."[381] The Education Outreach program at YAC is partly funded by the Department of Education.

12. Youth of Today Society

Offered at the Life Development Centre, the Youth of Today Society supports youth through programming if life and employment skills. The after school employment and training program operates from 4 to 8 pm and helps at-risk youth with homework and provides them with job skills. In addition, the Society provides programming to support youth in connecting to family and community resources.

13. Yukon Federation of Labour

The Yukon Federation of Labour offers workshops on labour and employment topics in partnership with the Canadian Labour Congress. In addition, Yukon labour locals provide skill building opportunities to encourage youth to become involved in skilled trades. A number of these opportunities are offered in partnership with First Nations.

14. Yukon Mining Training Association

As a partnership between First Nations and the mining industry, Yukon Mining Training Association seeks to "to maximize employment opportunities emerging from the growth of the mining and related resource industries in the North for First Nations and other Yukoners."[382] By focusing on youth, YMTA is raising awareness about the opportunities available in the exploration and mining sector. To this end, YMTA has recently produced the *Yukon Mining Careers Handbook* which outlines career opportunities in mining in Yukon and "includes the knowledge, abilities, and skill sets required for each as well as the education and training requirements."[383] This information is supplemented by community awareness seminars in a number of First Nations communities.

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[381] Council of Yukon First Nations. (n.d.) *Community Education Resource Guide*, p. 33.
[382] See http://www.yukonminetraining.com/about-ymta.html.

15. Yukon Women in Trades and Technology

As a non-profit organization, Yukon Women in Trades and Technology provides education and advocacy for women interested in pursuing careers in trades and technology. More specifically, YWITT assists with promoting, training, recruitment, and retention of women in these areas.[384]

YWITT's activities include an annual conference in Whitehorse for girls in Grade 8 where they are introduced and can try their hand at a number of trades. Weekend and evening courses introduce women and girls to welding and other trades. Finally, Yukon Women in Trades and Technology sends tradeswomen to communities to work with girls in Grades 5 through 8. They present hands-on workshops and role modeling for women in trades and technology.

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[383] Yukon Mining Training Association. (2008). *Yukon Mining Careers Handbook*, p. 3.
[384] See http://www.yukonwitt.org/

CHAPTER 6:
ANALYSIS OF EXISTING INFORMATION

A. EXISTING DATA

A variety of existing data were provided. Data used for this section includes:

- Enrolment by School and Grade: All Yukon Schools – December 31, 2007,
- Forecast Enrolment by School and Grade: All Yukon Schools – September 2008,
- Data displayed in the *School Facilities Study: Final Report*, June 2007 (Hold Fast Consultants),
- Students Designated as IEP – All Yukon Schools as of May 2008,
- IEP Analysis for All Schools Years 1999/00 to 2007/08,
- Enrolment data provided by Wood Street Centre to Department of Education (June 2008),
- Six –year Completion (Graduation) Rates,
- Completion Analysis for Grade 8: 2001/2002 and Ethnicity: Other and School: Enrolled Graduates,
- Grade 12 Completion Certification by school, by home community,

1. Enrolment Data and Projections

Regarding current secondary school enrolment, in November 2007, the enrolment at F. H. Collins Secondary School was 616 students, down from 1000 students in 1997. Porter Creek Secondary School enrolment in November 2007 was 643, down from its high of 802 students in 2004. Both schools are currently operating below their ideal capacity estimated at 857 for F. H. Collins and 899 for Porter Creek, while Vanier Catholic School is operating close to its ideal capacity.[385]

Population forecasts (developed by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics and quoted in the *School Facilities Study: Final Report*) suggest that, regardless of which population forecast is used (low, medium or high growth), Yukon's population is aging. There will be a higher proportion of the population in the 50+ age category and a smaller proportion of the population five to 19 years of age. The school age population will decline over the next 10 to 15 years. This holds implications for any new facility(ies) and/or the refurbishment of existing facilities

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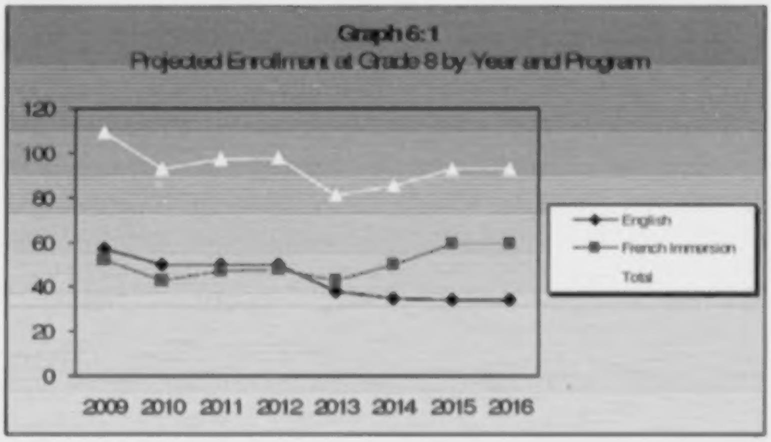
[385] Ideal capacity numbers are taken from the Hold Fast Consultants, *School Facilities Study: Final Report* (June 2007).



Graph 6:1
Projected Enrollment at Grade 8 by Year and Program

However, despite some decline in the overall population over the next eight years, the number of students in French Immersion entering secondary school in Whitehorse will be growing, while the number of English program[386] students is projected to decline (Graph 6:1). Within these programs the First Nations population is stable or increasing.

2. Individual Education Plan (IEP) Data

Another consideration in the student population is the number/proportion of students on Individual Education Plans. Data exist from 1999/2000 to 2007/2008. However, between 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 there was a significant increase in the number of IEPs at the three secondary schools in Whitehorse, suggesting that there was some change in policy and practice in 2000/2001. Therefore, 2000/2001 will be used as the baseline year (Table 6:1).

Table 6:1
Number of IEPs by School and Ethnicity 2000/01 to 2007/08

Year	F. H. Collins		Porter Creek		Vanier Catholic		Total	
	FN	Non-FN	FN	Non-FN	FN	Non-FN	FN	Non-FN
2000/01	46	45	41	65	10	72	97	182
2001/02	43	38	52	54	7	67	102	159
2002/03	39	35	48	62	6	49	93	146
2003/04	36	40	57	62	6	83	99	185
2004/05	41	40	62	76	19	68	122	`184
2005/06	32	33	55	79	21	65	108	177
2006/07	39	35	56	73	40	62	135	170
2007/08	16	57	44	97	28	63	88	217
Total	**292 (48%)**	**323 (52%)**	**415 (42%)**	**568 (58%)**	**137 (21%)**	**529 (79%)**	**844 (37%)**	**1420 (63%)**

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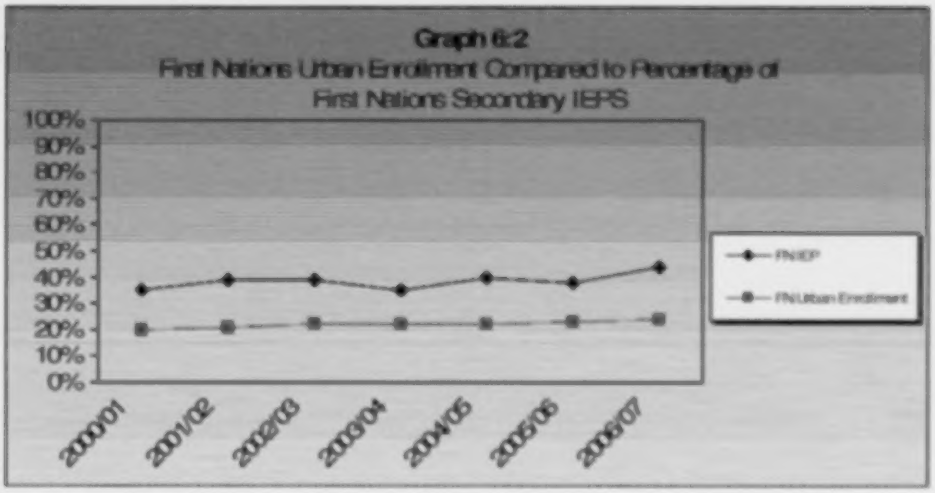
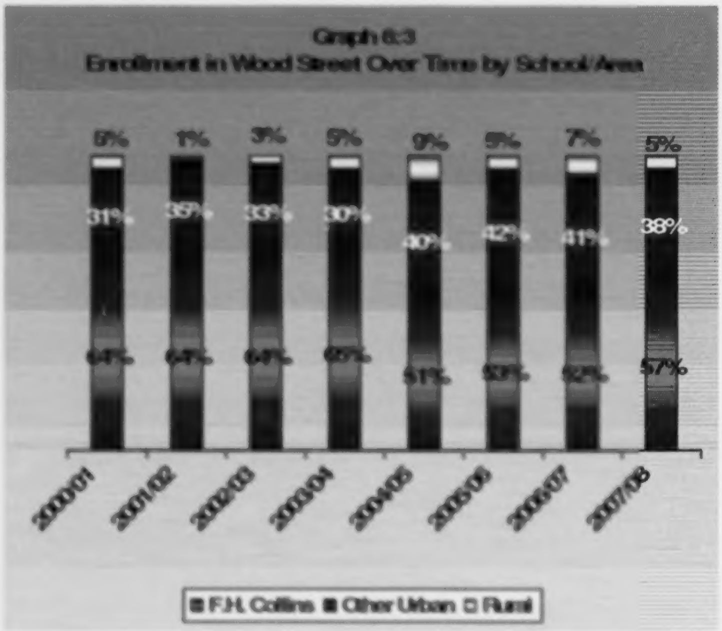
[386] The English program numbers are those projected for the Whitehorse elementary feeder schools – Golden Horn Elementary and Selkirk Elementary. It is recognized that these projections are subject to change and do not take into account population fluctuations or students entering Whitehorse secondary schools from rural/remote communities.



Graph 6:2
First Nations Urban Enrollment Compared to Percentage of First Nations Secondary IEPS

Consistently, First Nations students comprise about 22% of the urban school enrolment, they represent over 30% of IEPs at secondary schools in Whitehorse, suggesting an over-representation of First Nations students having IEPs.

3. Enrolment in Wood Street Centre



Graph 6:3
Enrollment in Wood Street Over Time by School/Area

A total of 52 rural students attended Wood Street Centre between 2000/01 and 2007/2008.[387]

The majority enrolled in Wood Street each year were students from F. H. Collins Secondary. However, between the years 2003/04 and 2004/05 the percentage of F. H. Collins students decreased and the percentage of other urban students increased (Graph 6:3). Proportionately, rural enrolment was highest in the 2004/05 school year.

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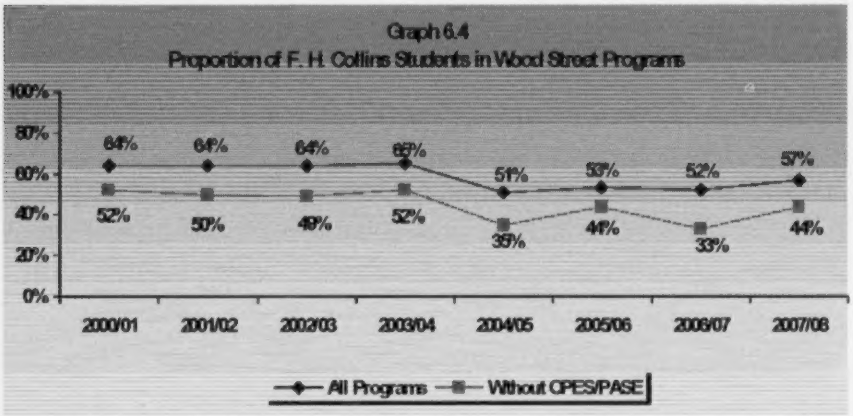
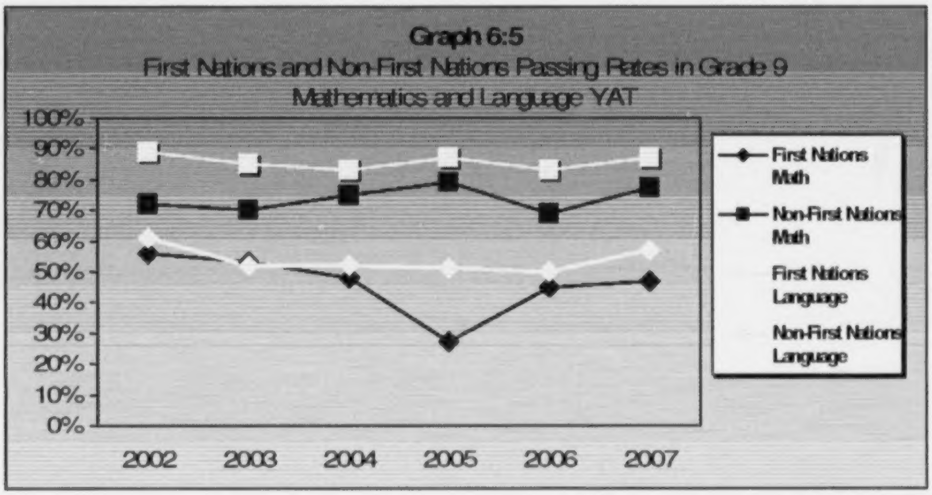
[387] The 1999/2000 year was omitted due to a large discrepancy in the data. Neither was 2008/09 included as it is assumed enrolments were not final at the time the data were compiled and sent to Proactive.



Graph 6:4 shows the proportion of F.H. Collins students overall and with the OPES and PASE enrolments excluded.

4. Secondary School Achievement Data

Some data do exist on student achievement at secondary school according to ethnicity. However, these data include all of Yukon; Whitehorse secondary school data is cannot be extracted.[388] Graph 6:5 shows the passing rates for First Nations and non-First Nations students on the Yukon Achievement Tests in Mathematics and Language Arts at Grade 9. A lower proportion of First Nations students pass both Yukon Achievement Tests, regardless of year.



In addition, data from the number of students writing the BC Provincial Examinations in 2006/2007 were examined. While the average scores between First Nations and non-First Nations students were comparable in the majority of cases, few First Nations students wrote the exams in what could be termed the more advanced academic courses. For example, seven First Nations students wrote Chemistry 12 with an average mark of 52% as compared to 86 non-First Nations students with an average mark of 57%. The subject with the largest discrepancy in achievement rate was Applications of Mathematics 12 which was written by five First Nations students with an average mark of 31%, as compared to 15 non-First Nations students with an average mark of 61%.

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[388] If data are available specific to Whitehorse secondary students, these data were not provided to Proactive.

5. Secondary School Completion and Graduation Data

Traditionally Yukon Department of Education has calculated graduation rates by dividing the number of students who actually graduated by the number of students who had the potential to graduate at the beginning of Grade 12.[389] The 'potential to graduate' is defined as any student who is enrolled in the correct combination of courses to meet graduation requirements and who will graduate if they pass those courses. The number of students who graduated in 2008 was 347, which means that 89% of the 388 students with the potential to graduate actually did. By comparison, there were 57 students who identified themselves as First Nations students who had the potential to graduate, of whom 49 graduated (86%). First Nations students represented 14% of students who graduated in 2008.

Statistics Canada collects graduation information differently, calculating graduation rates by counting the number of persons who have graduated as a percentage of people in Yukon who are 17 and 18 years of age. This method provides an approximate graduation rate of 71%.[390] However, the number of people in the territory aged 17 and 18 who identify themselves as First Nations is not available so graduation rates for First Nations students cannot be calculated using this method.

The first method does not include students who dropped out prior to their Grade 12 year, nor does it include students who may not be taking the required courses leading to graduation. The second method does not give an indication of First Nations graduation rate as compared to the total population. Some jurisdictions in Canada calculate the graduation rate by counting those who start secondary school in Grade 9 (Grade 8 in the case of Yukon) as a percentage of those who finish five or six years later. In the case of Yukon a six year completion rate would calculate the percentage of students who start in Grade 8 in a given year and who remain in the system and complete (graduate) from grade 12 within a six year period. The six year span allows for students who need to return to complete one or two courses they may have been missing after five years.

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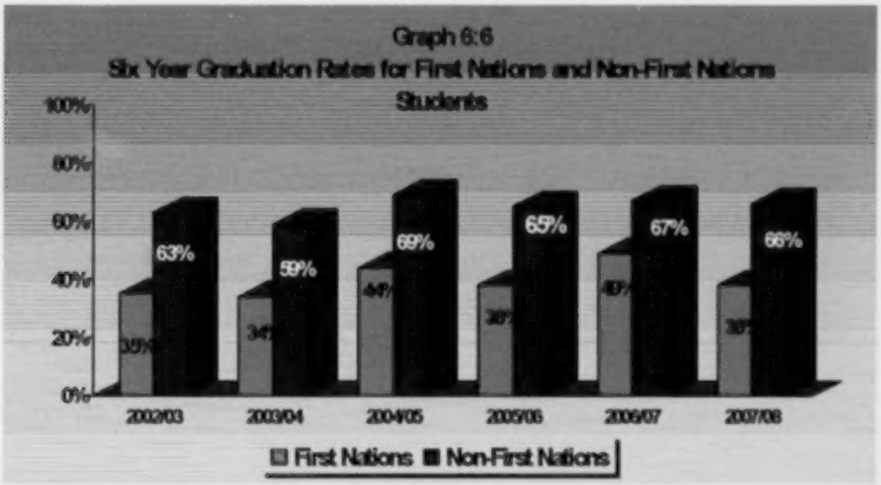
[389] The Yukon Department of Education is currently reviewing how it identifies graduation rates. According to the Yukon Department of Education, within Canada there is no consistent method among provinces and territories for collecting data and determining graduation rates. The Department of Education will continue to work towards identifying the most informative way to represent graduation rates in future.

[390] Students are typically aged 17 or 18 when they graduate. In June of 2008, there were 506 17-year-olds in the Yukon (based on calculations from the health care system) and there were 476 18-year-olds. To correct for the fact that some of the 17-year-olds will be beginning Grade 12 in 2008, and that some of the 18-year-olds graduated in 2007, Department of Education averaged those numbers: 506/476 = 491. So it was estimated that there were 491 young people in the Yukon of graduation age, compared to 347 students who actually graduated, and that provides an *approximate graduation rate of 70.7%*.

Graph 6:6 compares the six graduation rates of non-First Nations and First Nations students. (The rates for 2007/08 were projected.)



When calculated by urban secondary school the 2001/02 to 2006/07 six year graduation rate for the original students in the school was 45% for F.H. Collins (9 of 20 students), 40% for Vanier Catholic (2 of 5 students), and 36% for Porter Creek (12 of 33 students). When viewed as 'potential to graduate,' the percentage of graduates who are First Nations has moved from 16% in 2000/01 to 11% in 2002/03, up to 20% in 2005/06 and 2006/07.

An issue which arose numerous times during the Secondary School Programming Process was the students who were receiving Grade 12 completion certificates. Very little data appear to exist regarding the number of students who receive these certificates. The Yukon Department of Education was able to provide information that in June 2007, there were four such certificates issued for students at F.H. Collins. In June of 2008, Porter Creek had requested seven such certificates and Vanier Catholic had requested two. However, data are incomplete and the actual magnitude of this practice over time is unknown.

B. EXISTING VISION AND PLANNING DOCUMENTS

1. Mission and Vision

The *School Facilities Study: Final Report* identified the need to review mission and programming before building a new school or launching a major renovation of F. H Collins Secondary School. The mission for F. H Collins must also be considered in light of the mission of other schools in Whitehorse and the vision for secondary programming in Yukon. Consequently, existing educational documents were reviewed.

Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon (and hence École Emilie-Tremblay) have a particular vision for French education: « Les Francophones du Yukon reçoivent une éducation en français reconnue pour son excellence et pour sa contribution au sentiment de fierté et d'appartenance à la francophonie. »[391] The Whitehorse Catholic Schools also have a mission specific to educating children in a Catholic learning environment:

> Through the sharing of knowledge and Christian values, and by celebrating our Catholic faith, students are assisted in developing a personal faith and an understanding and appreciation of self and others. Each child has the opportunity to strive for academic excellence and to reach his or her potential as a life-long learner.[392]

The Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee also has a vision that speaks to culture and language as well as to student success.

> . . . an education program and environment that supports First Nations student success in academics, culture, and language, so that they graduate from high school well prepared for participation in life and life-long learning, no matter where they live and work. The students in this vision are succeeding and accomplishing their dreams.[393]

Consequently, Porter Creek Secondary School and F. H. Collins Secondary School, by default, must address the needs of students who are not part of the francophone or Catholic education systems including, but not limited to, First Nations students. Porter Creek describes their viewpoint through this belief statement:

> At Porter Creek Secondary School we believe students should be able to develop their full potential, their sense of self-worth, personal and social responsibility and a love of learning. Education is a partnership; it is [a] shared responsibility of students, parents, teachers, and the community.

While this represents an overall belief statement, they follow up with a goal that reads "to make our school more inclusive of our First Nations students and to create a 'sense of belonging' among First Nations students."[394]

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[391] Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. (2005). *Plan stratégique 2005-2010*, p.4

[392] Patrick Maguire Consulting Services. (2004). *Circle of Caring II*, p. 2.

[393] Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee. (2008). *Helping Students Succeed: Vision, goals and priorities for Yukon First Nations Education*, p. 8.

[394] Porter Creek Secondary (2007). *School Plan Summary*, p. 8.

A statement from the *Education Reform Project: Final Report* which speaks to a definition of student success may be helpful: "Success should be defined not only by how well students are mastering basic academic principles, but how well they are able to look at real world issues and situations and put them into context."[395] While the quote is in reference to First Nations students it fits equally well for all students, including those being educated in the francophone and Catholic contexts.

Commonalities among the statements found in existing documentation include the desire for excellence, the need for student pride and self-worth, the concept of life-long learning, and the importance of connecting to the larger society, linking the personal and social contexts. However, the question remains, how similar or different should the mission and vision be between F. H. Collins and Porter Creek Secondary Schools? If these schools fall under the broader vision for secondary education in Whitehorse, what are the unique features (if any) of each school's mission?

2. Issues that Impact the Future of Secondary Programming

A number of issues have been raised through the presentation of existing data, including issues relating to the decline of the school age population coupled with an increased proportion of students in French Immersion and the fact that First Nations students do not achieve the same level of success as their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

Relating to the enrolment trends, is decline of students electing to stay in the francophone system for their entire school career: <<…les eleves inscrits dans l'école francophone depuis la maternelle ou la pré-maternelle décrochent en nombres alarmants lorsqu'ils arrivent au secondaire.»[396] While the francophone system is outside the scope of the secondary school programming process, the fact that francophone students have historically chosen to move to other secondary schools at the higher grades and that they continue access shared programs such as those in Wood Street Centre, means that their educational decisions do have some impact on the future of secondary programming in Whitehorse.

While touched upon in the discussion of existing data, the issue of the School Leaving Certificate deserves some further attention. This is not only an issue for First Nations students, it is believed they are the majority of those students who receive this credential.

> Some students complete secondary school without graduating. Instead they receive a School Leaving Certificate or a School Completion Certificate. These students do not have the necessary

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[395] Executive Committee of the Education Reform Project. (2007). First Nations secondary school, *Education Reform Project: Final Report*, p. 2.8.

[396] Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. (2005). *Plan stratégique 2005-2010*, pp 8-9.

> credits to pursue post-secondary studies. This is a serious concern for many parents and First Nations.[397]

Another issue that affects both First Nations and non-First Nations students relates to the difficulty of transitioning into Whitehorse secondary schools from rural communities.

> When [rural] students come to Whitehorse, the school is much larger, with a much greater number of students. Everything is unfamiliar. Community students may not feel comfortable asking for assistance. This can make them frustrated and confused, and in some cases can cause them to miss classes or drop out of school.[398]

The Old Crow Education Report also raises this as both a transition issue and an issue of different standards and expectations between school in Old Crow and schools in Whitehorse.

> Most students have encountered a wide variety of difficulties when they move to Whitehorse to complete their high school and to carry on in post secondary education and training. Some of these difficulties stem from what appears to be different academic standards and different school work expectations between Old Crow and Whitehorse. . . . In addition to academic challenges, students reported cultural, social and emotional challenges that had often derailed their best intentions. Orientation problems were reported at the start of their schooling in Whitehorse. Many students felt they could have been more effectively informed, but most also indicated that they really didn't put out the necessary effort to achieve their goals. A number of students indicate they were academically unprepared for a number of high school courses. The gaps in their skills and knowledge contributed to difficulties faced while attending school away from home.[399]

This speaks to the need for some type of bridging program to build academic skills for students who are moving from rural communities to high school in Whitehorse, as well as to the need for counselors and other supports: "[there is an] urgent need for more and better training for counselors and home-school support workers who work with aboriginal children and youth."[400] In addition, there is a need for elders or other adults to help facilitate cultural activities and events that would help connect students with each other and with community.[401] Other supports could include an increase in the number of Aboriginal administrators and principals "with a thorough understanding of traditional practices and values."[402]

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[397] Executive Committee of the Education Reform Project. (2007).Rural-to-urban transition, *Education Reform Project: Final Report*, p. 2.19.

[398] Executive Committee of the Education Reform Project. (2007). Rural-to-urban transition. *Education Reform Project: Final Report*, p. 2.18.

[399] *Old Crow Education Report*. (2006). p. 19.

[400] Executive Committee of the Education Reform Project. (2007). First Nations secondary school, *Education Reform Project: Final Report*, p. 2.10.

The transition issues continue past secondary school, not only because of the confusion around the School Leaving Certificate, but also because of a lack of career counselling: "First Nations students, especially from rural communities, need access to career counselling to ensure a smooth transition in achieving their career goals. Many First Nations would like to have career fairs so that parents and students are exposed to the variety of career choices available."[403]

A reality that also has great potential to impact on the future of secondary programming is technology. Currently in Yukon public schools there is approximately one computer for every two students. "All Yukon schools also have access to high speed internet connectivity. As well, most schools have access to video conferencing in their schools."[404] As suggested in the Education Reform Project: Final Report, video teleconference course options, along with coordinated schedules, could allow secondary school students in Yukon communities to have access to Whitehorse programs. The secondary schools and Yukon College should study opportunities for increasing access to courses through this type of technology."[405] Certainly, new technologies offer a wider variety of program delivery options as noted by the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon: « Les nouvelles technologies permettent une variété d'options, soit en tem réel ou différé, en salle de class ou à distance, ou par une variété de différentes approches. » [406]

The increasing demand for skilled tradespeople in Yukon, and across Canada, is another trend that holds implications for secondary school programming. The most recent data indicate that 15.6 percent of Yukoners hold a trades certificate or diploma.[407] However, employers often do not have qualified journey persons who are willing to train apprenctices and the education system has difficulty finding certified tradespeople who have an education degree.[408]

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[401] Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee. (2008). *Helping Student Succeed: Vision, goals and priorities for Yukon First Nations Education*, p. 11.

[402] Executive Committee of the Education Reform Project. (2007). First Nations curriculum, *Education Reform Project: Final Report*, p. 1.19.

[403] Bosely, E. and Reid, J. (2008). *Sunrise*. Yukon College. p. 16.

[404] Yukon Education. (2007). *Education First Annual Highlights Report*. p. 2. Only Teslin, Carcross, Beaver Creek, and Destruction Bay do not have video conferencing facilities available to them.

[405] Executive Committee of the Education Reform Project. (2007). Secondary schools and Yukon College, *Education Reform Project: Final Report*, p. 5.19.

[406] Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. (2005). *Plan stratégique 2005-2010*, p 16.

[407] Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2003.

[408] Executive Committee of the Education Reform Project. (2007). Apprenticeship and trades training, *Education Reform Project: Final Report*, p 6.2 and 6.3.

3. Areas for Programming Improvement and Systemic Change

The Secondary School Programming process has as one of its Guiding Assumptions, that existing strengths will be valued, while areas for growth or improvement will be identified. Therefore, it is important to mention that the strengths of various components of the system are recognized. Yukon has advantages within schools, such as the depth of technology and the related inter-connectivity. The different schools have their own particular strengths, whether that be in ethos or their programming. In addition, experiential programming offered at Wood Street Centre as well as in the schools are viewed as a "support to teaching and learning inside and outside the classroom."[409] One such example outside of Whitehorse is found in Old Crow where they are working towards some new models for credit acquisition:

> Experiential education, such as culture camps, focuses on the integration of academic curriculum with VG [Vuntut Gwitchin] culture and heritage in ways that embrace a wider variety of students. Gwitchin cultural activities receive high school credits through IDS [Independent Directed Study] and/or Department authorized courses.[410]

> *"Reflecting the Gwitchin world throughout the entire school environment involves staff attitudes and behaviours; curriculums (sic) used throughout the school; the resource materials used; the teaching methods used; the school policies and plan. It is far more than including some symbolic cultural activities. It is really about connecting the daily activities of the school with the Gwitchin world around the school."*
>
> - Old Crow Education Report, 2006.

Other community programming (see examples in the Program Inventory section of this document) are also strengths to be recognized. The Journey Far carving program at Sundog Retreat, for example, has achieved "considerable success in meeting the complex needs of its clients, including expanding personal, interpersonal and adaptive living skills."[411]

However, as suggested by the previous issue identification section, improvement is needed in a variety of areas. For First Nations students specifically some programs of particular interest are "leadership training, language/cultural immersion and land-based programs."[412] Beyond programming, it has been argued that "fundamental systemic change is required for First Nations students and communities to achieve their educational goals."[413] Such system changes include improved communication and expectations between schools and post-secondary institutions, better professional development for educators and para-professionals to help them develop an understanding of Yukon First Nations history, communities and issues, a strategy for increasing the number of First Nations teachers and administrators, as well as attracting and retaining high quality teachers and administrators in rural communities.

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[409] Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee. (2008). *Helping Student Succeed: Vision, goals and priorities for Yukon First Nations Education*, p. 10.

[410] *Old Crow Education Report*. (2006). p. 8.

[411] Psychology Centre, (2008). *Journey Far Carving Program Outcome Evaluation*. p. 3.

[412] Executive Committee of the Education Reform Project. (2007). First Nations secondary school, *Education Reform Project: Final Report*, 2.8.

[413] Executive Committee of the Education Reform Project. (2007). First Nations students, *Education Reform Project: Final Report*, p. 2.23.

"Education is a partnership; it is [a] shared responsibility of students, parents, teachers, and the community."

- Porter Creek Secondary, School Plan Summary, 2007.

Beyond systemic issues related to First Nations peoples, the issue of strengthening connections between schools, families and community was raised in many of the documents. While everyone agrees as to the importance of such connectivity, the reality requires systemic attention. School Councils are one system attempt to involve families and communities; however, there are questions about their effectiveness. Terms may not be long enough: "School councils are constantly in a stage of flux, with not enough time for members to be able to understand the issues and propose solutions."[414] This statement also begs the question – whose issues are they? Is the role of the School Council simply a reactive one? Another example of the need for greater connectivity has been cited as that between Yukon College and First Nations "to enhance the dialogue on course offerings, accreditation and transferability of courses and establishment of new degree/diploma programs, and to build a strong partnership that creates a sense of accountability on both sides of the table."[415]

Another systemic issue is the lack of a systematic mechanism for tracking individual students over time. The current approach has been described as "ad hoc" which:

> provides some insights into the success of various programs and administrative practices, but it does not provide detailed information about the success of specific educational approaches, nor does it support in-depth diagnosis or remediation. It also does not measure the number of students who start school in kindergarten and go on to graduate from grade 12.[416]

The Old Crow Education Report also identifies the need for tracking student school performance over time in order to "give Old Crow insights into how the education of their youth may be improved . . . . A student database that provides long term student profiles on an individual and collective basis will achieve this goal."[417]

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[414] Executive Committee of the Education Reform Project. (2007). Proposed governance structure, *Education Reform Project: Final Report*, p. 1.9.

[415] Bosely, E. and Reid, J. (2008). *Sunrise*. Yukon College. p. 18.

[416] Executive Committee of the Education Reform Project. (2007). Educational data, *Education Reform Project: Final Report*, p. 5.14.

[417] *Old Crow Education Report*. (2006). p. 3.

4. Facility Requirements

The *School Facilities Study: Final Report* identified the status of Whitehorse schools in terms of their capacity and the state of the F. H. Collins facility.

> Taken as a whole, Whitehorse schools are operating well below capacity levels and will continue to do so through 2020...Some schools, such as Elijah Smith Elementary, and Holy Family Elementary, are operating at, or near, capacity. Other schools, such as Jack Hulland Elementary, Whitehorse Elementary, F.H. Collins Secondary and Porter Creek Secondary, are operating well below their capacity levels . . . . Earlier engineering studies indicate that, at the time of writing this report, F.H. Collins Secondary has exceeded its life span by four years.[418]

Other planning studies by francophone and Catholic schools identify specific facility issues as well. The Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon's stategic plan stated :

> ...il importe de considérer les mérites de resituer les élèves du secondaire dans un milieu séparé des élèves de l'élémentaire. Un centre éducatif distinct à l'intention des élèves du secondaire est un élément essentiel à la stratégie de rétention de la CSFY. Il est entendu que les nombres au secondaire sont insuffisants pour justifier la construction d'une école secondaire francophone.[419]

Circle of Caring II identified specific building concerns "including air quality, gymnasium space, the need for spiritual reflection areas and areas to accommodate specialist programs."[420] While these facilities are beyond the scope of this process, it is important to note that secondary schools do share programs and with the possibility of secondary education renewal, these concerns should be noted.

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[418] Hold Fast Consultants. (2007). *School Facilities Study: Final Report*, p. ii.
[419] Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon. (2005). *Plan stratégique 2005-2010*, p.13.
[420] Patrick Maguire Consulting Services. (2004). *Circle of Caring II*, p. 12.

CHAPTER 7: QUALITATIVE DATA

A. INTERVIEWS WITH KEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STAFF

Fifteen staff of the Department of Education were interviewed, including representatives of the Public Schools and Advanced Education. The conversations were wide-ranging and provided information on the context and history of secondary programming in Whitehorse, as well as on the issues and directions for secondary education. The discussion of the results of these interviews is framed around the themes used to structure the Literature Review as those themes relate to current educational issues, many of which were addressed by Department of Education staff.

1. Fundamentals

A number of Department of Education staff addressed the fundamental issues of the purpose of schooling, the philosophy of inclusion, student engagement and transitions. As one Departmental consultant noted concern that the education system, in practice, does not always **focus on the students**: *"the goal of what we are trying to do needs to be 'what do we want to provide for kids'."* In relation to this sentiment, some staff expressed concern that secondary schools can sometimes be too academically focused, missing programming that could serve the needs of certain segments of the student population.

> *We are still programming for kids as if they are all going to university. Kids go into the workforce without skills. For example, there is no business education in secondary schools except accounting and computers in business.*

The need to recognize learners as individuals and program for a diverse student population was a theme in numerous comments: *"We need a strong recognition of the individual learner."* A vision for addressing the needs of all students was presented in the statement of one Department of Education staff person who suggested:

> *A vision for inclusion would be a system that had something for all students - at risk kids, special needs kids - based on multiple intelligences and not a one size fits all approach.*

When addressing a philosophy of inclusion, a few people expressed concern about the WELS program.[421] WELS was perceived by one person as having *"no curriculum, no supports . . . a dead end program."* The concern was heightened by the fact that not all students and parents seemed to understand that these students will not graduate, rather they will obtain a high school leaving certificate. More broadly, another Department of Education staff person expressed surprise about *"the number of graduates – diploma holders – that end up in Developmental Studies. We need to look at this system-wide."*

Transition of students into secondary school was an issue raised by a number of people in the Department of Education, particularly in relation to students coming into Whitehorse from other communities: *"transitions is a major issue. Lots more support is needed for the rural to urban transition and from Grade 7 to Grade 8."* Another person saw it from the perspective of students coming into Whitehorse noting that *"the secondary schools are not that welcoming – too many things, too many people."* Suggestions were offered to help address this issue such as secondary and middle school teachers having opportunities to connect and learn from one another. Two people suggested a "bridging program" or "transition year" to help solidify student skills and set them up for secondary school success.

2. Educational Practices

There was some concern that **curriculum and instruction** were not promoting success for all learners. *"We need teachers who can teach in six or seven different ways"* to support the learning of a diverse student population. It was suggested that a more project-based or integrated approach was needed, with supports for collaborative teaching. For example, *"At F.H. Collins English and Social Studies teachers co-taught a unit on World War II."*

Regarding curriculum, someone noted, *"everyone needs to see themselves in curriculum."* This was viewed as important, but confounded by the fact that there is a human capacity issue - "*we can't do curriculum development; we just take little stabs at it . . . .*" However, others felt this curricular issue could be addressed; *"there's no reason curriculum couldn't be built around a trap line."*

The community program most often mentioned as a model for programming for youth who were not successful in mainstream education – and where First Nations youth could see themselves in curriculum – was Sundog. One person wondered *"why such a program couldn't exist in any of our secondary schools."*

Numerous Department of Education staff identified the need for more experiential learning opportunities, particularly for First Nations students. *"We have some really good programs in Whitehorse, like Experiential Science 11. How do we make our*

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[421] WELS refers to both the WELS program at F. H. Collins and the ESD program at Porter Creek.

best practice common practice?" Definite concern was expressed that rich opportunities existed, but they were *"not open to all students."*

> *We need to be more innovative with offering our experiential programs. I know that there might be liability issues . . . but the current advanced programs are elite and expensive.*

One suggestion was that more **experiential programs** be offered at all schools, using a van and mobile equipment to support some programs moving among schools from a central hub. Another idea – which apparently had been explored some years ago – was having an environmental/outdoor education centre in Whitehorse that could be accessed by all schools and by the public: *"this would work well with First Nations education and there seems to be revived interest in the community in something like this."* There was a belief that opportunities exist to build what is known about successful programs, such as Experiential Sciences.

Many of the people interviewed identified the need for curricular and instructional changes that would reduce the drop-out rate and support greater educational **success for First Nations students**.

> *First Nations students live in a bicultural world . . . the answer is not just to integrate First Nations content into curricula, but to combine First Nations views and approaches with research-based best practices. We need to balance the cultural aspects with providing students the skills they need to succeed.*

The need for teachers and schools to reflect First Nations culture and language and the necessity for First Nations students to feel welcomed and valued in secondary school were highlighted: *"counselors should advise First Nations kids the way they would their own kids."*

The issue of language for Yukon First Nations students was also raised. While it was recognized that for some First Nations languages there are few fluent speakers, arguments were made that innovative ways to offer First Nations languages should be explored, similar to the Master Apprentice Program which uses a combination of immersion with an Elder or language speaker and self-recording, among other elements, to develop language proficiency. Elders could work with language teachers who might not be fluent in order to provide language programming. Also related to language, one person suggested that the English spoken in some small First Nations communities was a different dialect and that *"we need to have an English as a second dialect approach for some First Nations learners."*

Linked to curriculum and instruction is **student assessment**. While not widely raised as an issue in the interviews, a few people noted its importance and the need to move towards assessment for learning. *"We have to get out of the old assessment paradigm."*

Virtually all those interviewed from both Public Schools and Advanced Education talked of the need to increase emphasis on the **skilled trades, technical vocational education, and apprenticeship** opportunities. *"We are sorely lacking in the trades. If we had a high school – a trades high school or a really strong trades wing in a larger high school – that would be great."* Another, while supporting the need for this programming, argued *"I can't image a trades only school."* A strong technical vocational wing at F. H. Collins was suggested by someone else as well. Others saw this area as a place for potential partnerships with Yukon College, Skills Canada, and employers in the community. *"Maybe we could have co-operative programs where work in the summer months would count towards credit."* When thinking about the programming itself, one person suggested that a gender-based approach should be explored to encourage more female participation – *"perhaps a female-only woods or automotive class?"*

The fact that vocational training was a government priority was viewed as a positive; *"Vocational training and apprenticeship will fall away when there are no champions."* The July 2008 news releases confirmed this priority, citing the increased number of apprentices[422] and the federal and territorial governments' support for young people learning skilled trades.[423]

3. Structures and Schedules

Two people interviewed supported the creation of a large secondary school "consolidating" existing schools in order to provide comprehensive programming for all Whitehorse secondary students. One suggestion was to place such a facility near the Canada Games Centre. The only other suggestion regarding structure (besides those that dealt with vocational facilities) was that any new structure needs to be *"eco-friendly."*

However, there were a number of comments regarding the possibilities for **e-learning and distance learning**. The potential of video-conferencing was raised, particularly as it related to learners in small communities:

> *We need to bring schools together on this issue. They can have two kids in one community and five in another taking the same class – why are we not doing the course through distributed learning? . . . we should be doing a lot more of this [coordinating with courses in Whitehorse secondary schools with rural schools]. . . . my idea is a teacher with five courses can be using video-conferencing with two courses and still support students in the community . . . [but] we need to have professional support for students using distance learning. We know this because students getting professional support are 80% successful.*

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[422] Yukon Government, News Release #08-180, July 22, 2008.

[423] Yukon Government, News Release #08-177, July 21, 2008.

It was also suggested, by more than one interviewee, that more could be done cooperatively among schools regarding scheduling in order to provide more alternatives to students. *"However there are a lot of nay-sayers on this issue because there is competition between schools."* A number of other people approached this same issue through identifying the fact that secondary students will engage in *"teacher shopping."*

4. Other Comments

Another issue frequently raised by Department of Education staff was the issue of **resourcing**: *"We are richly resourced, but do we always use the resources to our best ability?" "We have been fortunate that money is no object. Now we need to have a rational examination of resources."* This discussion also led to the issue of duplication of programming: *"There is duplication of programming and staffing between F.H. Collins and Porter Creek. We could use the resources more effectively if we looked at staffing and programming differently."* Related to this concept, another person suggested that different schools could be *"centres of excellence in particular areas. For example, F. H. Collins could have an experiential and technical vocational focus."*

Other comments addressed the importance of **leadership** in the schools, of superintendent involvement in schools, and of a team approach at the Department. Finally, one person addressed the issue of a comprehensive student information system:

> *We can't figure out what's working or not . . . for example, is Reading Recovery working? We don't have the data to make these decisions. How can we say we are doing our jobs if we don't have the data to say what's working or not? We need the expertise in the Department to decide upon a system and what data to collect. We need to focus on this sooner rather than later.*

In closing, the Minister noted that the *"school system needs to build community . . . with a population of 5000 kids we need a system that meets the needs of all of them . . . typical systems have not always met with success."*

B. SCHOOL SITE VISITS AND EDUCATOR INTERVIEWS - WHITEHORSE

The consultants visited the secondary schools in Whitehorse, other educational sites (e.g., ILC, Teen Parent Centre, Riverfront), as well as the feeder schools. The visits included a tour of the facility and the opportunity for administrators to highlight unique or special features of the school. The visits provided a better understanding of the context and realities of secondary education in Whitehorse.

The following discussion is not intended to be an exhaustive description of each setting. Some unique features of each setting are noted in the discussion without any intention drawing comparisons or making evaluative judgments. Issues that have the potential to influence or drive future programming are highlighted. The Program Inventory chapter provides a description of the programs offered in the various schools.

1. Secondary School Visits

A number of visits were paid to **F.H. Collins Secondary School**, given its centrality to the Secondary School Programming Process. The mix of students, the economic diversity of the catchment area, as well as the variety of programs were notable features. F. H. Collins, because of the Gadzoosdaa Residence, receives the majority of students, most of whom are First Nations, who come from rural communities to go to secondary school in Whitehorse. The building itself is a hodge podge of areas, making navigation through the various wings somewhat confusing and time consuming. Initiatives, such as Challenge Day and Culture Week, have been instituted to support a positive school culture and environment, while a variety of programs and supports are in place to support struggling learners. The school offers many courses and programs from a "language nest" to technical/trades programs. The Transition Program, in pilot status, is intended to support under-performing students who come from elementary schools or rural settings and do not have the skills to be successful in the regular program. The teacher takes these students *"where they're at and moves them forward using a variety of strategies and assessment techniques."* The administrators also mentioned their philosophy of inclusion which has influenced not only school culture, but also the building of sports teams. At the same time, a flexible approach supports the needs of elite athletes. F. H. Collins values its diverse student population and its initiatives and programs designed to meet the variety of student needs.

Porter Creek Secondary School has a student population drawn "from both ends of the socio-economic spectrum." About half the students are bused. Approximately a third of the student population is First Nations, primarily from Kwanlin Dun and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. The School Council has a guaranteed First Nations representative. As does F.H. Collins, the school has a variety of programs and supports to support struggling learners and works collaboratively with Justice, Probation, Social Services, and Children's Services. The school based team, including the counselors, CELCs, and all those involved in programs for students with special needs meets once a month. The school offers First Nations Arts and Culture to all students in Grades 8 through 10, as well as a new course, Yukon First Nations 12. The school also has a three year pilot program to combat drugs that puts a program coordinator and dog in the school. The school building itself, originally a junior high, does include shops, but they are of a limited size. Nevertheless the school is able to offer an apprenticeship opportunity in carpentry because of the qualified instructor, which the principal noted are difficult to find. The principal also spoke of the advantage of having three different high schools in Whitehorse that give communities the ownership of their own secondary school and students opportunities to have competing sports teams. Shared programs, such as those at Wood Street, were viewed as working well.

Vanier Catholic Secondary School, like Porter Creek, was originally a junior high school to which various sections have been added over the years, as well as three portables. The school has a joint use agreement with the City and First Nations, so facilities can be used after 6 p.m. by community. The school is Catholic, faith-based with mandatory religion courses. While most students are Catholic, some non-Catholic students also attend. Approximately 20% of students are First Nations. While sometimes the CELCs from F.H. Collins drop in to the school, the desire was expressed for someone on-site. The school runs a different timetable than other schools with five blocks per day, Monday to Friday. The Grade 8 and 9 timetable is linear (full year), while Grades 10 to 12 run on a semester system. The music program operates largely outside the regular timetable, because of the Grade 10 "bottleneck" where students only have space for one elective in their timetable. Like Porter Creek, while the shops are small, a popular Sled Ed program is always filled. As part of their full slate of courses, they offer all three Mathematics streams, Leadership courses, and an outdoor integrated experiential course. Students are required to do a total of 40 hours of community service over the course of their secondary education. Focus has also been placed on transition from the feeder schools. For example, Grade 12 students facilitate a spring retreat for Grade 7 students. Vanier also has a Religion Education Coordinator in the school. As stated by the vice-principal, *"everything we do revolves around a student's faith journey."* The school values its faith-based culture, its smaller size and more intimate atmosphere, making the idea of one large secondary school unworkable for them.

École Emilie-Tremblay was also visited as part of understanding the Yukon system and context. The school revolves around the francophone identity, language and culture, responding to the needs of the francophone community: "faire vivre l'aspect francophone identitaire . . . seule école au Yukon qui permet au étudiant d'être parfaitement bilingue." One difficulty they encounter is accessing clinical services in French. They are currently in the early years of a five year pilot project to move all secondary learning into an experiential framework (except mathematics), using a project-based approach. Community volunteers are another component of this initiative. They would also like to explore possible partnerships with community facilities, such as the Canada Games Centre.

Wood Street Centre, administered by F. H. Collins, was also visited by the consultants on more than one occasion. As described in the Program Inventory, Wood Street offers experiential programming, the majority of which is open to students from all secondary schools. The programs have evolved over the years.

"ACES was initially for students who weren't doing so well and it included less science. Now there is more science and different kids are coming to the program." The population includes *"many repeat families . . . [and] maybe some kids don't get in who should."* The school was seen to work well, in part, because *"it is away from everything else,"* and because of the dynamic, dedicated, and long-serving staff.

2. Visits to other Educational Sites

The **Individual Learning Centre** (ILC) was designed to be a place for students who were not being successful in regular secondary school programs. The ILC uses ProActive Curricula which are self-paced, mastery based courses, based on the British Columbia curriculum. Students are age 15 to 21, academically able, and out of the school system for at least four months. However, they did have a WELS student who was in the Adult Graduation Program. At the time of the visit there were 112 active students, approximately half of whom were First Nations. Fifteen were on the waiting list. Approximately 50 young people have graduated since they opened.

Each student has a mentor who meets with the student, helps her/him set goals, and who checks in on student progress. Two staff are on-site at all times. An alcohol and drug counselor comes in once a week. Students are valued as individuals: *"Everyone has their own story and everyone is here for their own reasons."* Most students take a couple of courses and do other things as well. For example, the flexibility of the ILC allows parents to take work home and drop off completed assignments when they need to be with their children.

> *We always leave the door open. We want them to have a positive experience with education and learning. And we want them to know that there are people who care about them.*

Riverfront is the site that provides programming for students with severe behaviour issues which have negatively affected their school career. Many have had some experience with the criminal justice system. Students can stay until age 21 and can graduate from Riverfront. However, in the last four years it was reported that only one student graduated and two had received school leaving certificates. Most students are First Nation males who excel when they are out in the bush, on a trap line; *"when you talk about their culture, they perk up."* Six of the young men attend Sundog. Like the Individual Learning Centre, Riverfront uses the ProActive Curriculum. The programming is not limited to academics, but includes social and life skills, such as practice for job interviews. However, staff at Riverfront felt strongly that there needs to be more First Nations cultural content, along with more First Nations teachers. Experiential learning opportunities in traditional settings were desired.

The **Teen Parent Centre** represents a support for young women who are pregnant or who have young children. *"Six or seven Dads are also in the picture."* Some students attend F. H. Collins, some use the ProActive curriculum. *"If it's too late to get into the school - because you have to get in at the beginning of the semester – they will do programming here."* The transition into F. H. Collins was described as often being difficult, despite the supportive teachers, *"particularly the first two or three weeks . . . we will work with the girls and tell them what to say if other students comment [about them]."* Teachers are also invited to come for lunch on Fridays so *"they get to see the girls in a different light."* Concern was expressed about young women in the communities who become pregnant: "*Pregnant girls in communities may want to continue at school, but things fall apart for these girls and they drop out. There is an access issue; some who should get access don't."*

Another support for secondary students in Grades 10 to 12 is the **Gadzoosdaa Student Residence.** With capacity for 38 students, the residence serves both First Nations and non-First Nations students, with priority given to those who come from communities without their own high school. Visits are made by Gadzoosdaa staff to all the communities to meet the families and introduce them to the residence. Students have a variety of supports once they come to Gadzoosdaa. The importance of tutoring support (which is provided in a variety of ways) was emphasized, because *"[many] kids come in lacking skills, usually because of past absenteeism."* Gadzoosdaa provides a safe and structured environment for students as they attend secondary school away from home: *"It would be ideal to have high schools in all the communities and then the residence would disappear, but that's not going to happen."*

3. Feeder School Visits

The three primary feeder schools to F. H. Collins were also visited – Golden Horn Elementary, Selkirk Elementary and Whitehorse Elementary.[424] The discussion focused primarily on issues of transition to secondary school and the type of programming that should be available at the secondary level.

Administrators in the feeder schools identified some transition supports that had been instituted at F. H. Collins including "pre-8 math" for students performing below grade level. In addition, prior to Grade 8 are parent nights, help for students and parents with course selection, as well as meetings between the elementary staff and F. H. Collins staff regarding students with special needs. While it was noted that most students handle the transition, *"for the more vulnerable, it's a tough transition."* So reaching out to parents and thinking of ways to improve the bridging still need to be addressed.

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[424] A visit was also paid to Elijah Smith Elementary as many people cited it as a positive example of welcoming parents and community and providing culturally appropriate programming for First Nations students. Its architecture and welcoming spaces were also applauded.

Regarding secondary programming, the importance of "relevance" was stressed, with suggestions for more inquiry-based and experiential learning opportunities. One administrator noted the need for Yukon First Nations students to be able to access all the same opportunities as non-First Nations students, there should be rigorous courses focused on First Nations culture, that non-First Nations students would likely be interested in as well.

At one school it was argued that *"The Yukon has many high powered people with high expectations."* Therefore, while there is a need to *"fix the literacy gap"* at Grade 8 for some students, there is also a need for *"elite programming for future leaders."* For students coming into high school without the necessary foundation skills, *"dramatic intervention is needed in Grade 8 or Grade 9 . . . a focused program with the best teachers"* to bring students up to grade level.

So while some students will go on to university, for others there is a need for trades programs in the high schools to *"give kids a ticket to the workforce."* This vision included thinking about foundations for specialized jobs that are available in the Yukon such as those linked to hydro-electric and the geo-sciences.

The growing proportion of French Immersion students was raised at Whitehorse Elementary School. One possible scenario proposed was the creation of a new K-12 Immersion school, dividing up Wood Street programs and technical vocational programs between F. H. Collins and Porter Creek, perhaps with a district principal in charge of vocational programming and apprenticeship.

The administrator at another feeder school echoed the importance of the vocational/trades component to secondary education: *"There should be more programs for students that want jobs. Introduction to social skills and job etiquette. Job skills. Credit for summer work."*

As the administrator the other feeder school concluded:

> *If I'm dreaming, we definitely need an academic stream with as wide a range of academic courses as possible so we keep students competitive for entrance into universities down south. Then there's another tier. The skilled trades are very important and are also demanding academically. So if we are going to support the professional trades we probably need a school to specialize, provide a range of viable courses in good facilities. Not exclusively trades as academic courses would be strong in all schools . . . there are opportunities to partner with skilled trades and the unions . . . [finally] each school should have room for some specialization with students having the opportunity to access programs in all schools.*

4. Interview with Other Educators

Educators interviewed in secondary schools, elementary schools, and First Nations representatives were asked about the issues they believed were important to the future of secondary education and their vision for the future.

The issue of the inclusion and achievement of **First Nations students** was raised by virtually all the educators who were interviewed. As one educator noted: *"opportunities for kids in the Yukon are remarkable, but First Nations kids don't get the benefits."* Another educator in a different setting echoed this sentiment:

> *There are two roads through the education system in Yukon . . . the one for First Nations students is rocky and not paved, while that for non-First Nations students is smoother. Although the kids may not be able to articulate it, they feel it. There are lots of barriers for First Nations kids.*

There was general recognition by both First Nations and non-First Nations educators that *"there is too big a disparity between First Nations and non-First Nations in achievement and drop out rates."* This in turn affects students' post-school options. As stated by one educator, *"First Nations have a legitimate complaint that not high numbers are getting an academic diploma that would allow them go to on to Simon Fraser or UBC."*

> *"First Nations students in Whitehorse are in a really difficult situation...they don't know how to read and write well and they don't know how to light a fire either. As a result, they don't have academic or traditional knowledge. However, you have to read and write to get a trapping license and to pass the firearms acquisition course."*
>
> \- Educator

A variety of strategies to help change the situation were proposed including more culturally appropriate programming, more language programs, First Nations counselors, more CELCs, strong understanding of First Nations by school administrators, and a change in attitudes.

> *There is a need to implement more culturally appropriate programming in both elementary and secondary school. . . . more First Nations perspectives in the institutions, more cultural relevance, and an environment that is comfortable for learning. . . . A strong First Nations arts and cultural program could enhance any high school.*

The connections between language and culture were also stressed. While some pointed to the difficulty of losing First Nations speakers (*"Language Immersion for First Nations would be great but we do not have the speakers"*), others saw ways to enhance existing language programs.

> *[Yukon First Nations] culture is outside but we are in a classroom in Whitehorse . . . there are so many barriers to even taking these [First Nations] students on field trips. They need the experiences because most don't know their culture. . . they don't know how to light a fire. They have no clue about trapping. You need to be outside and on the land to learn FN languages. The classroom is not the ideal place to learn this.*

A similar idea was to use the concept of experiential programming and link this to communities:

> *What we need is a Wood Street-like program focused on First Nations. A leadership course including students from each of the communities with projects in communities to develop leadership skills and close connections with people in the communities who have a common body of knowledge . . . where people get strength from each other. . . you need to create a core [of leaders] to build from.*

"We need to adapt our system to First Nations students not that they have to adapt to our system." For example, one educator argued for the need for First Nations counselors in schools (or at least for cultural awareness training for counselors). For example, if there is a death in the family, there is an expectation that the student will stay with the family for a while and not come to school. There needs to be more understanding of these types of cultural issues so that kids can be supported in school.

Concerns were raised about teachers not always holding high expectations for First Nations students: *"Most FN students have a label...they have IEPs or are labled FAE...if the opposite were true and most white kids were not being successful in school...there would be big changes."* While not all educators held this view, a number of comments were raised about lack of equity within the system which people *"often don't see or want to see."*

Another issue that surfaced numerous times was the issue of the school leaving or the **high school completion certificate**:

> *Most families don't understand the difference between a graduation and school leaving certificate, so they say it is o.k. for their kids to go into these programs because they don't understand the consequences. First Nations need to be clear and educated on this issue.*

> *There are communication issues at the high school regarding the school leaving or high school completion certificate. We need to make sure that every student knows what they are able to do when they leave high school.*

"Remove the WELS program – it's not doing kids justice" was the recommendation from some educators. And, as another First Nations educator noted: *"I would like to see students graduate from Grade 12 and go right into post-secondary with a solid knowledge of language, culture, and where they come from."*

> *"Good teaching looks at individuals; we know that. Most teachers know that and want to do it, they just don't have the time."* - Educator

Beyond issues related to First Nations students, concerns were raised about what happens to students at secondary school. *"Those who are doing well continue to do well and those who are struggling continue to struggle."* How can the needs of all learners be met? *"We need to meet the needs of kids in different ways. Lots of kids needs are not being met in the traditional classroom."*

Many voices praised Yukon's **experiential programming** and argued for expansion of experiential programs, similar to the Wood Street programs, that would serve a larger proportion of the student population.

> *Wood Street programs are good for all learners. They have higher success rates and smaller classes, more one-on-one time.*
>
> *When kids can go out and do things, you have no behaviour problems . . . . We need to create a bigger Wood Street that will serve a more [wider variety] of kids.*
>
> *Curriculum delivery needs to be more experiential across the system. It's been done successfully elsewhere in a project-based approach. . . We need a fresh look at what education is.*
>
> *In Sundog you see the power of experiential learning . . . that program could be instituted in a secondary school. Kids need a sense of ownership and Sundog has that.*
>
> *Let's get past it [traditional secondary school] . . . kids could be trained to be guides when they finish high school. They would need basic numeracy with hands-on life examples.*

While the academic stream was perceived to be strong and serving students well who were going on to university, another route for providing a relevant education for students was seen **technical vocational education**. Again, many voices expressed the need for more emphasis on technical vocational education and, with it, an attitudinal change: *"We should not de-value the trades;" "we need to hold people in* *high regard who produce things . . . there is a lot of opportunity to begin exploring the trades,"* and, *"we need a strong apprenticeship approach. I am not sure this will happen until we value the trades on the same level as academics. Is this within our capabilities?"*

> *We need a strong composite high school with a trades/vocational aspect in more serious way than we have . . . . kids who aren't going to university should have the opportunity to follow a trade and get a high school diploma"*
>
> *We need to build a school for kids who are not going to college or university. 80% to 90% of the budget is spent on academic university preparation and not anywhere near that percentage of students go. . . the system does very little to get kids to think about what they want to do with their lives.*

The one caution was from a First Nations education who warned, *"be careful about shifting the focus to technical vocational, because First Nations aren't expected to go on to university and they will be put into technical vocational."*

The need to support a positive **transition** into secondary school was also raised as an issue that deserved continued attention.

> *One thing that would be helpful is someone to look after transition of students, help parents fill in applications, find housing for students and put them in contact with supports.*
>
> *In the communities, schools are small and personal. Then there's the transition . . . what is needed is the school to make a connection. The more compromised a child's situation is, the more they need the connections. So we need to break down the school into smaller chunks.*

As educators looked towards the possibility of a new secondary school and enhanced secondary programming, they made a number of **other recommendations**, some of which had to do with staffing and the utilization of human resources.

> *We need a team in place prior to opening a new school . . . a team to connect with community and set up the [new] system.*
>
> *Administrators should have time to get out of the school and connect with community. If you want to involve a business person you have to get out and connect . . . make it a requirement.*

> *You need to change the allocation of staffing if you are changing the programming that is needed . . . A secondary school needs a great administrator who has understanding of First Nations.*
>
> *We have to use our human capacity, Elders, social workers, RCMP, form a team . . . [and then] we need to provide ways for parents to be in the school . . . someway that parents contribute to the school.*

A few people also addressed the possible **design** of a new school: *"We don't need another square box high school."*

> *I don't want to see a separate First Nations school. But there could be some kind of community centre in the school where Elders could be and a 'speakers corner' where kids could congregate.*

A **change in the school year** was also proposed by a few people: *"School year doesn't have to be September to June. [It could be year round.] This would work more around the lives of kids and not kids fitting into the system."*

Finally, many people offered a sense of **optimism**; *"Yukon has great potential in the system," "We have so much . . . there's nothing you can't do here."* Many educators also sensed a movement for change and for building upon the existing system to create a better one: *"there are so many things in the air, all trying to come together at once."* This was coupled with a desire to ***"move to action."*** *"We can make things happen instantly; we can turn on a dime if we want."* The question remains how many educators across the secondary system will come together to support action that will realize a renewed vision for secondary education.

> *When you are asking about a vision for secondary programming, what you are really asking is 'what do you want for your community and society?' Schools are microcosms of society. I would like to see a system that is inclusive and a level playing field. Every child has a right to reach their full potential.*

C. COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS - WHITEHORSE

As described in the methodology, interviews in the Whitehorse community embraced a broad spectrum including public sector (government, RCMP, Yukon College), First Nations representatives, community organizations/agencies, business sector, as well as labour. People were asked about their role (or potential role) with young people in the Whitehorse community, the issues they saw affecting young people and secondary education, and their vision for secondary education in Whitehorse.

People working in the public sector and community agencies identified a variety of **issues facing young people** in Whitehorse. The rate of trauma (e.g., sexual abuse and assault) was reported as being higher in the North and *"this plays into success in the mainstream education system."* A *"significant cultural disconnect"* and *"racial tension"* were also identified, as were issues around alcohol and drug use. *"Crack addiction is huge . . . drug dealers, violence . . . it's under-cutting all the good things people are doing."*

> *"Who owns education? We all have to participate in children's education."*
>
> – Community Representative

Nevertheless, people were optimistic about a **vision for education** that would increase the success rate of young Yukoners. While aspects of the current education system were valued in the community, people reflected on a new vision for education; one where all students are valued for their accomplishments and where students are *"participants in education rather than clients." "Give kids choice." "It's not just to help them, but to give them a voice." "We need high expectations for all students, rather than minimal competencies, let's raise the bar."*

> *One of the challenges is that schools are still largely organized the way they were 50 years ago, using the didactic model of 'I talk and you listen.' They are institutions that . . . [say] we can only do the things we have already done.*
>
> *For me, the vision is more transformational and includes students as change agents . . . change is happening through them, not to them. . . change is afoot and they [young people] have a vision that they could be part of creating it.*
>
> *I have a dream that's beyond First Nations, it's about empowerment. Not depending on the school to raise your child, rather the school is a tool for you and your child.*
>
> *My vision is that any child in the Yukon can work anywhere in the Yukon or in the South, but they still have the power to survive in a traditional way of life.*
>
> *Perhaps it is a universal or common sentiment for all people in Yukon that their children should be able to graduate with success and qualifications so they can go anywhere in the world.*

> *"The most important part [of curriculum] is the humanity part, not Grade 11 calculus."*
>
> - Public Sector Interview

Some people, depending on their role, focused on the need to think about what the **core aspects of curriculum** should be – what are the things most important for students to be learning in secondary school? Some of the skills identified were critical thinking, assertiveness, how to keep oneself in a secure (rather than a vulnerable) position, as well as the need to pay attention to physiological and psychological health.

One organization did an informal survey of youth involved with their program who had recently completed high school. The young people mentioned high school was not at all relevant for what they were doing now; *"relevance is really important to them. They needed to see how things relate to life."* They also found the transition to post-secondary difficult because *"they felt high school had not prepared them . . . at post-secondary they do a lot of project work and this was a form of 'culture shock.'"*

> *"There is a huge disconnect between what First Nations wants and what gets offered to them."*
>
> – Yukon College staff person

Regarding meeting the needs of all students, many people identified issues relating to **First Nations students**. Again, the lack of school success and the high drop-out rate were cited by many in the community, both First Nations and non-First Nations. There were also concerns about the different expectations for students in small communities as compared to students in Whitehorse.

> *What are the core pieces of First Nations traditions and knowledge that we can incorporate into curricula – all curricula – where appropriate. . . . [at the same time] there needs to be an understanding that First Nations students can be quite different from one another.*
>
> *History is only told in one way. We need to get away from the Euro-centric lens . . . where do you get your pride, your roots, from?*
>
> *There is a need to integrate First Nations across the curriculum where it's appropriate . . . a land claims course needs to be a core course somewhere.*
>
> *There are so many opportunities . . . . Bring traditional knowledge and Science together in the system. Make it standard practice.*

Many people in the community (First Nations and non-First Nations, parents, government representatives, people in community agencies/organizations) cited Sundog as an important and successful program that was a *"positive place for First Nations [youth]."* Having positive programs, based on traditional skills, were highly valued. One person who herself had gone to Wood Street, where *"all your senses were engaged,"* advocated for *"bringing Wood Street to the communities. Why not an experiential land-based program in Old Crow?"* Others saw the potential to have programming that would provide skills needed in First Nations governments, particularly in relation to land claims and environmental issues.

> *"Since 2004 more than 40 young people have learned to carve through Sundog Retreat. Powerful changes have taken place as the young artists use their skills to move out of a cycle of physical abuse, emotional neglect, justice system involvement, substance abuse and multi-generational effects of residential school. Many participants have not experienced success in the traditional classroom or the workplace, but demonstrate noticeable improvements in their outlook and self esteem. The artists have shown deep commitment to preserving their culture and passing on their skills. They have strengthened their pride in their Yukon First Nations Heritage, and are the next generation of cultural leaders.*
>
> - Information Brochure, Sundog Retreat Carving Program

First Nations representatives also raised the issue that *"colonization is more recent in the North."* The importance of the CELCs supporting First Nations students was noted by First Nations people interviewed. *"They need to be the buffer between cultural worlds."* This is particularly important for students who come to Whitehorse from the small communities, where they grow up with their families, their grandparents, food from the land, and small school settings. More orientation for these students to Whitehorse – *"recreation, library, other resources"* – was viewed as necessary, as were more role models in the schools (*"people who are doing beautiful things with their lives."*) While Gadzoosdaa residence was viewed as *"doing a lot of things well, and doing their best, they are still not family."* Therefore, it was reported that some families move to Whitehorse to find work when their children go to secondary school.

As did some educators, First Nations representatives in the community called for shutting down **WELS**. *"It's demoralizing, affects self-esteem, and 'enables' them. . . They never bring in Elders. People with expertise are not being used."* However, it was not only the First Nations community that had issues with this program; *"they just give them something to do rather than what the child needs. It is not appropriate for the population [that is in the program]. It's supposed to be based on their ability, but that's not what gets them in there."* As another program provider in the community, not a First Nations representative, stated *"talk to someone about the WELS program. The majority of kids are academically capable but they are failing."*

Transition into secondary school was also identified in community interviews as an issue. Not only are there difficulties for First Nations students from rural communities, but also for students with special needs.

> *Transition from elementary to Grade 8 means going to a much bigger school and this is the point where most students have their supports [EAs] removed. As a result, kids flounder – do really badly – and the school argues they need to go into a resource room.*

Regarding transitions, in one system it was reported that "*We work with transition from elementary to secondary through bringing Catholic schools and the community together. This connects the community, the Church and the schools.*"

> *"There needs to be experiential learning for all kids."*
>
> – Parent of a Student with Special Needs

Some parents and agencies interviewed expressed concern about **students with special learning needs**. A focus group with parents from the Yukon Association for Community Living believed that inclusion worked well in elementary school, *"but by Grade 8 students with special needs go into special classes. This is herding people with disabilities together, largely for economic reasons."* However, one parent described how her child had been mainstreamed at F. H. Collins and *"staff have bent over backwards to accommodate him."* Nevertheless, parental advocacy was viewed as absolutely necessary; one mother had refused to let her son be placed in WELS. In another situation a family had tried to get their son into MAD but was told this was not available to him. *"The best programs offered in Whitehorse – Wood Street – are not available to many students."* Parents of students with learning disabilities also supported the concept of more experiential learning opportunities.

Also, some parents believed families sometimes need an official advocate or ombudsman for dispute resolution; *"there is a need for a clear opportunity in an unbiased process for appeal . . . currently there is no third party appeal process for conflict resolution [between families and the school]."* There was a request that teachers be more accepting of input from parents, advocates, and specialists. Generally, there was a desire from community agencies focused on students with special learning needs that *"there is a need for increased services for students with special needs in secondary schools."*

More broadly, the suggestion was made that *"kids who are not fitting in should not be 'problematized.' It marginalizes them without folks realizing this."* One parent observed that *"the school system doesn't seem to lend itself well to boys."* She went on to note that she *"wished the hours of school were more in tune with the adolescent brain."* Others in the community also noted the fact that there were students who needed something other than the "traditional" school. *"Kids need challenges . . . even those kids who are acting out are probably brighter than we give them credit for."*

> *Kids have different ways of learning. Some are kinesthetic. They can't sit still and get through a book. Teaching can be done in other formats than written, such as verbal or students can demonstrate their skills.*

Some people recognized a need for ESL support beyond F. H. Collins, while others wondered if the needs of children with FAS/FAE were addressed well in Yukon. One person noted that these students *"can contribute positively, but take away their supports and they will be in cells. You watch them deteriorate without supports."*

Others believed that, while there were lots of opportunities for students *"there is nothing for the middle of the road students. Those that are struggling or those what do well are well served, but what about the middle of the road kids?"*

> *"We are still scratching the surface in learning by doing . . . learning by doing can involve the whole community."*
>
> \- Community Interview

As with educators, many comments were made regarding the value of **experiential programming**, including the potential relevance of such programming for First Nations students. *"There should be a First Nations experiential program. Wood Street is still Western."* However, people from all sectors mentioned the importance of experiential program. They knew about Wood Street and highly valued the approach. However, while the Wood Street programs were lauded, some believed that the original intention had not been realized.

> *In my view, Wood Street is a bit of a failure because we wanted to change the whole system. Wood Street became the place where like-minded people ended up because they could not change things in other secondary schools. . . . Originally, when Wood Street started, it was to be good for all kids, with kids helping one another.*

Other programs, outside the 'regular' secondary schools, also sought to offer experiential programs as Wood Street was viewed by some as having become elitist. However, experiential programming was also seen in light of the opportunities that Yukon's physical environment presents. *"Get kids back in touch with nature."*[425] It was suggested that while "traditional pathways" were appropriate for some students, and trades for others, *"perhaps there needs to be a third stream; on the land training for some students in isolated parts of Canada . . . living on the land."* The importance of *"land based"* knowledge was stressed by a number of people; *"we have a broader view, 100s of years of people living off the land, so we know how to sustain it; we have the knowledge right here that is relevant to today and the future."*

As with educators, there was a strong voice in all sectors of the community regarding the need for rejuvenated vocational and technical/technology education, including apprenticeship opportunities. Virtually everyone recognized the need for skilled trades people in Yukon and supported more emphasis on vocational programming: *"Remove the stigma of not being in a strong academic program, focus on trades, basic skills, a meaningful diploma for non-university kids;" "there is a need for a good co-op program and good vocational programming."* Many in the community supported the concept of *"starting apprenticeship while in high school."*

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[425] The number of people who mentioned a "bison hunt" in one context or another was remarkable.

> *Education needs to give people transferable [job] skills . . . . we don't put enough people into the system who have real life skills so that they can apply those skills to other learning.*

Opportunities for co-operative education and job placements were also cited by a number of those interviewed.

Much talk and many ideas were presented regarding the preparation of Yukon students for **life after secondary school**.

> *There are no programs in Yukon that bridge school and career. To do this we need to look at the essential skills needed for the workplace. If these programs were in place, kids could see that their career of choice was closer and not so hard to get to.*
>
> *Students have very little access to anything but traditional academics in high school, so they go into post-secondary and take arts or general science because that's all they know. Students need opportunities to be exposed to more possibilities when in high school.*
>
> *Students need transition supports from high school to post high school. Two or three years before they need to build their resume, have job coaching, life skills, and on the job support.*

The issue of students completing high school without a basis for entering college was also raised: *"they feel like they're being lied to...they 'graduate' from high school, but can't get into a pre-carpentry program."* As another community member stressed: *"Get rid of the school leaving certificate!"* A major barrier was viewed as the need for upgrading that many young people have to do through Developmental Studies, because they did not have the necessary pre-requisites or skill levels.

Many people interviewed spoke of the need to involve the community and families in education. Community connections were seen as having the potential to support vocational, technical and business-related programs in schools.

> *Programming should include qualified members of the business community . . . there should be more connections between qualified members in the community and the classroom. . . . They can teach ethics, morality and talk about the real world.*

"Education needs to partner with community, with First Nations, with [the territorial] government, with the city.

– First Nations Representative

Many ideas were presented about community opportunities for career exposure. *"There are not enough people in health care."* So the hospital works with the high schools and the university to expose young people to health care careers. In addition, one person mentioned the fact that First Nations had bought a number of businesses in Whitehorse and perhaps there were opportunities *"to hook up with them."* There was also a number of suggestions that students should get credit for volunteerism and actual work, not just *"work experience."*

The labour sector was open to collaborative opportunities, but expressed concern that the Department of Education *"does not think outside the box"* and do not want to engage in programs they did not develop.

> *We want to get youth involved in our programs, particularly in health and safety programs . . . [particularly because] of the Yukon's safety record. . . We want to work with Advanced Education and create partnerships . . . we have already signed a partnership with First Nations to encourage First Nations youth to get involved in the trades . . . we are building a training centre . . . we are open to partnerships to deliver programs . . . to help, talk, and work together. There is lots to explore.*

Skills Canada also supported engaging secondary school youth in trades and technology through partnering to provide programming. *"F. H. Collins was a hub in the past, but it has fallen behind . . . but it is still the only real trade setting we have. There is lots of opportunity."*

Some people offering programs to youth identified the difficulty of connecting with secondary schools: *"I struggle with how the high schools can use our program. They have curriculum constraints . . . mainly they use the outside experts who come to town."* This was also true for a number of community agencies who were connected with the ILC but not with the mainstream secondary schools. *"Schools need to be in partnership with outside agencies interested in providing learning opportunities for youth."*

> *"Its amazing how many programs there are. We are all out there helping kids and we are not coordinated."*
>
> – Government program staff

There was also a belief from many people in different sectors that there could be more collaboration between Yukon College, the Department of Education, and the community. From the College viewpoint, those interviewed expressed a willingness to explore possibilities, including continuing preliminary discussion about *"creative ways to work towards Grade 12, while also getting pragmatic training."* There was optimism that greater communication and collaboration was possible, as the College and the Department were already addressing issues of mutual concern.

At the school level, the role of the principal in connecting community and school was emphasized by a number of people interviewed; *"it all comes down to the principal."*

A number of people recognized that the community was small and *"every school can't provide everything . . . so there needs to be some* ***sharing of facilities****."* Wood Street was viewed as an example of how schools could share program opportunities among schools. *"In a small community we need a balanced approach to many systems that could bury people in a larger place. We wouldn't want to see schools that are too specialized because in this territory we don't need any more ways to divide ourselves."* In this same vein, another person stated: *"We don't want F. H. to become just the vocational school and Porter Creek is academic."* However, the size of community also suggested to many the need to connect educational and community facilities: *"I am stunned schools are not more available for community use ...schools are a community asset;" "Can Canada Games Centre be used more extensively? Wood Street uses it."*

Finally, there were a number of people who suggested exploring innovative school schedules such as year round schooling and different school start times for adolescents. There was also some frustration surrounding the perception of being driving by British Columbia's curriculum and calendar, particularly when "*children have limited knowledge of Yukon's rich and remarkable history.*"

Much like the educator interviews, there was a sense of optimism, a willingness to try new approaches, and a desire for action.

> *Schools in Yukon are well-resourced . . . because Whitehorse – and Yukon – is such a small community there is the potential to do something different and to be innovative ... but the critical thinking and the political will may not be there to make this happen.*

D. COMMUNITY VISITS

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation
Old Crow, Yukon

1. Old Crow

IN OLD CROW

Concerns were expressed that children in this community were not being adequately prepared for high school in Whitehorse. The lack of programming at the community's school coupled with low expectations for student success were seen as conspiring against students success at high school. *"When students finish Grade 9 here they are really below level."* It was mentioned that *"the science room is being used for fitness ... then in Whitehorse, sitting in science class, they are totally blown away and then their self-esteem crashes and then that's it."* Another individual made the point that *"the system here doesn't prepare the kids for high school."*

"Improvements in education should start first with our school here. Students should take Math and English, they should have more school work and more homework and there should be more after school activities." This was reinforced by a former student who stated *"we need more academics; I did not know a thing about high school."* There is a perceived need for parents to become more involved with their child's education, but *"parents have problems helping children with homework. We have to be taught how to tutor."*

> *"I still feel my daughter missed out on so much. It's similar to my own situation growing up in the residential school system. We weren't given a voice back then and today we still don't have a voice to share our concerns where people that educate our children will really take the time to listen, where our children can get the best of both worlds, the traditional upbringing, culture, language and traditions and integrate it into the modern school system where they will come out winners ... able to hold their own in any situation they are challenged with instead of walking away and saying 'I quit, its too hard to deal with'. I speak for people who cannot speak for themselves and I don't want our children here in our community to miss out anymore than they have. I still see children coming home, who miss home or can't make it out in Whitehorse. Somehow we have to meet them halfway. We can't do it all for them, we can't enable them, they have to meet life's challenges head on with the right tools beforehand ... [do] not label children who can't make it in the system. It makes them feel that they are failures for life."*
>
> \- Parent of a Former Student

There was some discussion as to whether Old Crow should have their own high school. This school would have *"more land-based activities"* which integrate *"traditional skills into the curricula."* However, while some parents may want secondary school in this community, other parents and their children want to attend secondary school in Whitehorse. Nevertheless, there were questions as to why some secondary school programming can not be offered in Old Crow. For example, one individual questioned, *"Why can't the ACES program be delivered here? Our kids are good on the land and it would be a way to achieve their high school."*

One parent stated, *"at the end of the day I want the best education our children can get."* Another parent said, *"I want our children to not just graduate, but graduate with the diploma and skills."* There is a need for parents and their children to have a better understanding of what courses are available and the implications when choosing certain choices. Families in remote communities are not fully aware of the implications that result from inappropriate placements. In addition, there is a lack of understanding regarding the differences between a diploma and a secondary completion certificate and the implications of the latter for the child.

Technology was seen as an option for providing secondary school programming for those wanting to remain in Old Crow. Technology was also seen as a way to help students in the community to *"keep up with science and social studies at the senior levels."* For individuals comfortable with technology, there are videos, an on-line atlas, as well as materials resulting from the Vuntut Gwich'in Oral History Project and

"I want her to be challenged, and stimulated as much as possible."
- Parent

the Vuntut Gwich'in Cultural Technology Project that can be incorporated into school projects.

Some *"parents fear sending their child away because of their residential school experiences."* However, there is a need for parents to get more involved in preparing their children for living in Whitehorse and for secondary school. As noted by one parent when speaking of her wishes for her child's secondary school experience, *"I want her to be challenged, and stimulated as much as possible, [with] hands-on activities; life doesn't come out of a text book."* This individual also believed that a *"buddy system"* where a fellow student is paired with a new student for the first month would be helpful. Parents also expressed concern about their children's safety while attending secondary school in Whitehorse.

EDUCATORS

There were a number of suggestions to ease transition from Old Crow to Whitehorse. One suggestion was to have a teacher working with students in Old Crow to accompany them to Whitehorse for their secondary school years. Another suggestion was to have a specialist work in Old Crow with the students for one semester and then accompany the students to Whitehorse for a second semester. It was also argued that block scheduling would enable students to receive some secondary school credits in their home community, prior to going to Whitehorse. This scenario would see a teacher/specialist work with students on one subject, such as English, for a period of five weeks. As stated by another teacher, *"bring excited, experienced teachers up here for a short period of time; [they need to be] excited, passionate teachers."*

"They have to leave here, I can't imagine how hard that is."
- Teacher

It was mentioned that some students are excited about going to Whitehorse for secondary school; however, *"there are others who just want to stay here … they are deeply connected to home."* This perception was reinforced by another teacher who stated, *"the kids know every tree, bush, where every puddle is, and then they have to leave here; I can't imagine how hard that is."*

There was realization among teachers that students going from Old Crow into Whitehorse are at a disadvantage. As noted by one teacher, *"courses are modified/adapted at Grade 9, but they are really at a much lower level."* It was also suggested that parents have to be better informed about the differences between a diploma and a high school leaving certificate as *"a lot of people are shocked and surprised."*

IN WHITEHORSE

Students arriving in Whitehorse for high school are already behind when they start due to the lack of history and science programming in Old Crow. Furthermore, implementing secondary school credits in Grade 10 was viewed as having made it more difficult for students from Old Crow attending secondary school in Whitehorse.

"Most of our students end up in WELS."
- Teacher

When students from Old Crow arrive in Whitehorse *"most of our students end up in WELS. The students complain, but not to the right people."* It was reported that *"teachers say we don't know very much; but it is our shyness!"* One individual stated *"all the classes I wanted were full. I wanted English and Math, but they put me into Essentials."*

Female and male students need more choices and opportunities to participate in sports or recreation - *"this can help our kids."* One parent said that, given First Nations are *"governing ourselves, it is important for the school to deal with First Nations History, land claims, self-government and civics ... aren't we supposed to be grooming them for life?"* The school should help them hold onto *"our culture and traditions; use Elders to give students the supports they need."* Curriculum supports and resources developed by the Vuntut Gwich'in Cultural Technology Project were suggested as being a benefit to schools and teachers when addressing these issues.

It was suggested that if students are struggling and the teachers cannot provide the needed supports, the school then should provide tutors. If students are on the verge of dropping out, one individual believed the school should work with businesses to get these students into on-the-job training. Suspensions are seen as being used too freely *"teachers don't look at [the student's] needs and feelings [they suspend them]. If it is a troubled student, go one-on-one; every child has the right to education."*

The lack of student housing in Whitehorse was identified as an issue as *"the dorm [Gadzoosdaa] is not big enough."* As noted by one individual, *"it is a challenge to find private homes to place students."* Furthermore, if students are lucky enough to obtain lodging in private homes, they do not receive help/tutoring with their homework which results in their frustration. While staying at Gadzoosdaa students have scheduled time for homework which was identified as a positive aspect. As noted by one individual *"the dorm was good it had mandatory study time."* However, one parent said s/he does not want to send her/his child to the residence because *"there are too many strangers and there are no connections [to Old Crow]."*

There is a need to prepare the students better for a secondary school experience which is much different than what they have experienced in Old Crow. Not only are the schools bigger, but *"every subject has different teachers with different attitudes and behaviour; you have to learn to live with that ... our students didn't know how to respond to that."*

> *"Every day brings a different feeling. When the geese fly over you feel homesick; when the snow comes, when the caribou come, you want to be home."*
> - Former Student

There is a need for secondary school staff to recognize that students are away from home in a large community *"and every day brings a different feeling. When the geese fly over you feel homesick; when the snow comes, when the caribou come you want to be home."* There is also a need for more openings in programs, such as Wood Street, for students from First Nations communities. As mentioned by one student, *"you come from a place where everybody knows everybody and go to a place where nobody knows you. Wood Street was good the teachers knew me as a person."* This individual *"felt behind and not prepared when I went to F.H. Collins."* S/he believed that schools should have *"more hands-on, experiential, every school should have programs like Wood Street."* Another student talked about how he had been *"put into WELS – I had no choice."* He went on to say he *"would like mechanics, where you can do things, small engine repair, chain saw repair, snowmobile repair, things you can use in you community."* When asked what he would like in a high school he said, *"I would like teachers that work with you, help you, and care about you."*

EDUCATORS

It was noted that *"the relationships with teachers are key in high school."* The high school should implement an Adviser/Advocate for all students from rural communities - *"someone who would speak for them."* This Adviser/Advocate would stay with the same students throughout their secondary school years allowing a relationship to develop and providing some consistency in the students' school life.

> *"I would like teachers that work with you, help you and care about you."*
> - Student

There was a perception some students from Old Crow are being inappropriately placed; *"they are automatically saying you are from Old Crow so into this course."* Old Crow students are experiencing classes much larger than they are used to; sometimes one class is the size of the total population of their home school. The hallways are nosier, crowded and people talk differently. It was argued that students are being *"tested down there [while they are] shell shocked, experiencing sensory overload and then sometimes get plunked into courses not appropriate for them."*

Teachers suggested there is a need for more individualized programming at the high school level *"looking at individual needs is really important."* There is a need for more choices for students relating to vocational education and opportunities to learn the trades, while being mentored or while working.

2. Ross River

ROSS RIVER
SCHOOL

Leaving the community was identified as a potential problem as *"kids from the community go to Whitehorse and they lose contact with the community. They gain some freedom which can be a problem."* It was also suggested that *"kids have to enter the workforce ... maybe [they should be] working towards a GED at the same time as skills and a [school completion] certificate that can be accepted in Advanced Education towards apprenticeship."* This was seen as better preparing the students while they were in secondary school as *"that's when you have a window of opportunity."* According to this individual, *"meticulous exercise books do not help them,"* rather there is a need to talk to the business community to give these students opportunities for success.

According to another individual, F.H. Collins needs *"to have a focus on First Nations Programming, culture, experiential hands-on learning. First Nations have to feel at home."* S/he went on to suggest there is a need for *"remediation, special programs - whether special education or skill building or less formal programming."* There should be a *"focus on the trades/technology and comprehensive shops programming, not just wood."* The fear of students leaving high school without skills prompted another individual to mention the need for *"on-the-job training like welding so at least they have that."* However, it was argued that there is also a *"need for an academic focus giving the kids literacy, numeracy, problem solving, and communication skills."* In her/his view there *"is a need for F.H. Collins to serve a specific purpose and have specific programs."* The design of a new F.H Collins should be imaginative to meet needs for the next 20 years and *"declining enrolments should be kept in mind."*

> *"We want some of our kids to go to university."*
> - Community Member

The high school completion certificate "does not relate to graduation so parents have a problem with it." There is a need for the Department to more clearly communicate the implications of this certificate to parents, although this individual reported that *"sometimes kids and parents have selective memory."* Another individual also believed this certificate to be problematic, as it is *"a big problem that students get the certificate and then have to do upgrading."*

There was agreement among those interviewed that students from Ross River going to Whitehorse for high school are not prepared. One student mentioned not being prepared and how hard the transition to F.H. Collins was. *"[It was] really hard to go to F.H. Collins because I was too far behind. Grade 10 here is Grade 8 there."* The credit system was also seen as working against students *"when they go to Whitehorse they have two years to get 84 credits."* One suggestion was for starting the credit system in Ross River at the Grade 8 level, so students will not be at a disadvantage when they attend F.H. Collins for Grade 11. This individual also reinforced the perception that students from this community are not prepared for high school in Whitehorse. *"An 'A' student here is a 'C' student in Whitehorse ... [students are] not being taught the basis for Grade 11 and they are not prepared."* This individual said that teachers hold low expectations for First Nations students *"parents want more for their kids – they are held back and parents are frustrated."* S/he went on to say that *"there is a need for the same curriculum and level of expectations as there is in Whitehorse."* Another individual stated that there is a *"need to change the system in the community to prepare for Whitehorse."* Someone else agreed, suggesting that education in Ross River is *"not up to standard ... there is better education in Whitehorse. It makes the student feel out of place and it takes them six months to catch up."*

It was proposed that, rather than placing students in programming below their abilities, schools should provide extra tutoring for students going into Whitehorse for high school. Bringing students from Ross River into Whitehorse for a half semester in Grade 10 would expose them to F.H. Collins and help with the transition process.

It was stated that consideration should be given to offering a high school option in the community of Ross River. The question was asked *"why do we have to send our kids to Whitehorse when they have Grade 11 and Grade 12 in Faro?"* A small residence in Faro was viewed as a way to keep the students closer to their home community. In addition, there was a desire to have programs such as ACES and Experiential Science offered in the community.

> *"I probably wouldn't have graduated if I hadn't stayed there."*
> - Former Student

A recent graduate talked about the hardships of being away from her/his home community and staying in Gadzoosdaa Student Residence. While s/he mentioned difficulty in getting used to the rules s/he admitted *"I probably wouldn't have graduated if I hadn't stayed there."* The long distances and difficulties in getting transportation to and from her/his home community were also encountered during her/his high school tenure. Other suggested that Gadzoosdaa will have to expand as the First Nations population is growing. It would also be beneficial to have a 'family room' at the residence for families traveling a distance to visit with their child.

The former student suggested there is a need for a Kaska CLEC and expressed disappointment in the fact that *"they automatically put you into the WELS class if you come from this town."* S/he had been put into WELS, but through the intervention from Gadzoosdaa she was taken out of WELS and put into a regular program. S/he reported being the only student out of seven from her/his community who had graduated not from WELS. S/he also believed *"you need more things here for kids and more preparation in Grades 8, 9 and 10 for high school."* While s/he took a First

Nations language course, s/he mentioned it would have been preferable to have taken a course in her own language. This former student also saw a need for increased opportunities for hands-on learning and more opportunities for learning outside of the classroom.

3. Teslin

TESLIN
SCHOOL

Going to Whitehorse from the communities is a big adjustment. F.H. Collins is different from their local school; it *"is intimidating, claustrophobic, there is no room in the hallways."* There is a need for more *"more open space, bigger areas, more freedom."* In addition, the city itself is presents somewhat of a *"major culture shock given the traffic lights and crosswalks.*|*"* This person made the point of how difficult it is for parents to be supportive when they are 100 miles away from their child's school. S/he suggests that students are put into Essential Math which is an *"adjustment for them as they no longer have supports ... it essentially dictates that they will become laborers."* S/he went on to say that students are not prepared for their secondary school experience *"you can't go with the Principles of Math 10 when you don't have Principles of Math 9 ... we can't put kids in position to fail!"*

Another individual believed *"it would be nice if the school had a trade focus and students could take electives at other schools."* It was mentioned that many of the students are returning to Teslin and that it would be desirable if the school provided them *"with skills they can market when they come back to Teslin."* This view was supported by another individual who stated, *"we need more of the types of programs which give kids skills for higher level jobs."*

One parent believed students were not being adequately prepared for secondary school science. While her/his child had a positive experience while living at the Residence, *"it was a heart breaker thinking of him going to the dorm when he was 15."* Her/his child went to Vanier which was a positive experience; *"he felt so happy, he was an individual again."*

Relationship building is very important at high school and at the Residence, yet these students only have one term to do it. *"We have put too many road blocks."* There is a perception that students are not being challenged and that teachers have too low expectations. Schools could increase the use of technology to engage those students who do not like going to school. One individual believed that F.H. Collins should *"specialize in certain things."* An example was *"Math and English geared to vocational areas ... carpenters don't care about Shakespeare."* S/he also suggested that the school should have increased sports and offer courses in a block schedule. *"Give me Math 10 for five hours a day for four weeks."*

Another individual would like to *"have a grade 10 teacher come out three times a year to see where [assess] the students are academically."* S/he mentioned that all Grade 9 students are repeating Grade 9 Math because they all failed. There is a perception that teachers do not hold high expectations for students. Furthermore, there is little parental involvement in the school, whereas *"the more kids know that parents are involved, the easier it is to settle them down."*

A new facility should be *"engaging, experiential, relevant, and friendly ... make it relevant, not the books, but hands-on, practical and relevant. The comfortability level for students has to be way up there ... make it the best at what it does."* S/he also suggested that the school could incorporate *"virtual classrooms where students work at their own pace."* There is a need for the school *"to bring everyone up to a level where they feel equal, important and valuable."* A new facility should have a school-within-a-school *"where the Grade 8, 9 or Grades 8, 9 and 10 students are in a separate area."*

The school needs to have an open door policy with an inviting entry space so parents are not asked *"why are you here"* when they come in. The school *"needs places where students can sit and hang out like Elijah Smith's entrance."* The school should also include a *"section that shares all First Nations."* Other suggestions for the school included *"make it a nice building that doesn't look like a jail with windows. It should have green space around it, glass to bring in the outside and a common area so glass faces the hallways and the common area."*

> The school *"needs places where students can sit and hang out like Elijah Smith's entrance."*
> - First Nations Representative

Having two Educational Support Workers was an asset in that the one working in Whitehorse played an important role in helping students choose courses. However, there was still a perceived need for increased *"orientation between rural and urban schools."* There is also a need for counselors to help students choose courses, explain the implications of their choices, and try to align course choice with student interest and ability. As noted by one individual *"counselors need to make appointments with all students and help them meaningfully select courses."*

It was also reported that parents do not understand the implications of course choices. *"I had a parent [become upset] who didn't understand she signed her child for the WELS program. Parents don't understand."* Again, it was mentioned how *"students are being set up for failure and then in Grade 12 they are not academically graduating!" "It sure is disheartening First Nations sink millions of dollars into education and get nothing!"* One observation was that *"if they had a better teaching system, you could go to Grade 12 here. Some kids just won't fit into Whitehorse; you could use teleconference [to help deliver certain courses]."*

4. Carcross

The people interviewed in Carcross also believed that *"parents need to be more aware of what classes students are taking"* and the implications they hold for the student. It was also stated that, while there are more distractions in Whitehorse, *"usually the kids that are not succeeding in Whitehorse are the kids that are not succeeding here."* Gadzoosdaa was viewed as being *"incredible, as it is so well run! The kids get under [Mr. X's] wing and he nurses them through to Grade 12."* Another view was that while there is a *"love/hate relationship ... I wouldn't have made it as far as I did without that place."*

"We need a true trade school in Whitehorse; part trade school and part high school. This is desperately needed in Whitehorse and the kids will flourish. A lot of kids don't fit into the academic stream." This individual also believed there is a need for schools to take education out of the school as *"every school needs to be a Wood Street school."* The school should be *"more experiential; that is the way schools have to go. [And] why they don't have a trade school is beyond me."* There is a perceived need to *"make the high school year more flexible, more experiential."*

> *"We need a true trade school in Whitehorse; part trade school and part high school."*
> - Educator

Another suggestion was for any new school to be *"built as environmentally friendly way as possible."* There is a desire for the building to be a unique, welcoming building, as *"green"* as possible, with a variety of spaces, including spaces for families. Other suggestions included, the need to be *"friendly, warm, with sky lights, natural lighting, full spectrum lighting."*

The new school should *"have counselors that work closely with Grade 9 students and make sure they are taking the right courses for college preparation or the trades. Counselors should know the requirements."* It was suggested that it should be the responsibility of the counselors to make appointments with all the students rather than waiting for the students to contact them. There was also a perceived need for a longer orientation to the school as *"a day is not long enough."* A more effective orientation was seen as easing transition into secondary school.

Finally, there was a perception that there is *"no partnership between Yukon College and the Department of Education"* and that this has had a negative impact on a number of former high school students. Furthermore, it was explained that there is not a partnership between the Yukon Native Languages Centre and Yukon College. *"We have to buy back our culture."*

> *I thought about my son's time at F.H. Collins ... he stayed at the dorm in Grade 10. He didn't like it, but I thought it was great. They welcomed parents there. We were even invited to stay for meals. They supervised homework and attendance. [In Grade 11 and 12 when he was no longer at the dorm] I had trouble with his attendance and the school didn't notify me until he missed well over the 12 to 14 classes they were allowed to miss before being kicked out ... once I got in touch with the Vice-Principal, he worked with me and faxed my son's attendance weekly and I didn't have any more problems."*
>
> - Parent of a Former Student

E. STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS

Student focus groups were conducted with a cross-section of students at F. H. Collins Secondary School, Porter Creek Secondary School, Vanier Secondary School, Wood Street Centre, and Gadzoosdaa Residence (two groups; one group of males and one of females). In addition, students in the WELS program at F.H. Collins participated in a focus group, as nowhere else was their voice being captured. While the discussions helped to frame the content and language for the student surveys, students also provided valuable insights into their secondary school experiences which are presented in this section.

1. Unique Characteristics[426]

Each group was asked about the unique characteristics of their school. The students at F.H. Collins and the students at Gadzoosdaa who attend F. H. Collins commented on the age of the physical plant and the need for improved facilities. Males at Gadzoosdaa also raised the issue of F. H. Collins' *"tough reputation."* The diversity of the student population was also recognized as a special feature of the school. Students at Porter Creek commented on the fact they had a *"newer school"* with generally good facilities and that they had *"lots of enthusiastic teachers and a special principal."* At Vanier, students felt their smaller setting, where *"teachers know you and care about what you think,"* was a unique feature.

> *"Don't give us throw-away teachers. Give us teachers who have taught and who know their subject."*
>
> \- Grade 12 Student

Students at Wood Street identified the fact that *"it's not so regulated, no bells, laid back"* and that students are closer *("everyone is together, not in cliques").* The experiences and challenges of the programming were also cited: *"you grow up a lot in these programs. It's not getting up, walking to school, going class to class; here every day is different. We are not robots."* They also mentioned that students applied to go to Wood Street programs: *"you have to write up something and try your best to get in . . . you are elite and you want to live up to that expectation . . . if everyone got in across the board then it's not special."* They also felt it *"gives you a break from a regular semester. . . it gives us a break from regular sitting in class."* The fact they are with teachers all day who *"like what they do"* was also viewed as special feature, in addition to the observation that *"we don't have problems – school fights, drug problems, stealing."* In large part Wood Street was perceived as an escape from regular secondary school.

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[426] For the most part, the responses from students in the focus groups will be aggregated. However, there are some aspects, such as the uniqueness of the sites that warrant identification of schools.

2. 'Best' Courses

Students were asked to talk about the "best" courses they had taken in secondary school and why these specific courses were preferred. Some students identified a particular subject because *"I'm good at it."* However, teachers were one of the major reasons why students like particular courses: *"Teachers make the courses. You like teachers if they are laid back, flexible, no late slips, treat you as an equal and are respectful."* They also identified courses where *"teachers like what they are teaching, then they are more enthused."* Another aspect was that the teachers created an environment that was *"controlled, but fun."* One student had a slightly different perspective: *"I pick my courses depending on the teacher . . . which ones give out better marks and which ones like you."* Students in all groups were able to identify numerous situations where teachers made the difference.

> *"Everyone has different ways of learning . . . classes should not just be focused for kids who can sit at a desk and learn off a chalkboard. Everyone is different."*
>
> - Grade 12 Student

The more prevalent reason students preferred particular courses was because in these situations *"teachers weren't just reading out of the text and teachers enjoyed it too because it's not just the same stuff over and over."* This type of learning was consistently described as *"hands-on learning"* where you "go do it and then you have your own memory of it, not someone telling you." Examples included: *MAD "where you actually do English not write essays;" "Sled Ed - it's mechanics, but towards snow mobiles. You go out on big trips and you learn so much;"* and, *"photography . . . you had freedom and you wanted to use the cameras [to create something] and you didn't want to skip."*

The relevance of learning was also cited frequently as reason for liking particular courses: *"stuff you could actually take outside, not geometry and how far the mountain is, but how to do my taxes."* These comments were often connected with statements about the importance of hands-on or authentic experiences. One student also spoke of the need to have challenging as well as relevant work: *"Make [assignments] more challenging. Some of the assignments are so stupid that I don't do them – no point. If I had something more challenging and had to work at it, I would do it."*

> *"[We need] more hands-on activity. There is only so long you can sit in a desk and watch someone at a chalk board. Well then, I'll just stab my own eyes out! Even just setting the class up in a circle or in groups helps make a difference."*
>
> - Grade 12 Student

The small class size, combined with flexibility and fun, was example of a favourite class: *"we get through the material so quickly. We have a small class so we can learn it and have lots of fun . . . it's not BC structured."* The issue of feeling rushed was raised a few times *("teachers don't have the time to do fun topics or special projects")*, usually in conjunction with comments about the BC curriculum: "*We are run from BC and their curriculum is kind of rushed – so core subjects are more structured, not [having] the freedom there is in the options."*

Students in WELS also wanted more outside experiences. One of the students mentioned that s/he *"missed elementary school"* because at secondary *"they always do the same types of things. We want to do things that are more fun and different. We want to do things that are outside."*

Students want to be actively engaged in their learning (*"not everyone learns through a desk"*) and they want it to be relevant to their lives and futures (*"learn things for the real world"*). They value teachers who have a passion for their subject and who respect and care about their students.

3. Course Selection

In order to get a sense of whether secondary students could access desired courses, students were asked about course selection and availability. At Vanier, students were most likely to believe that their options were limited: *"in bigger schools they get more options of things you want to do in the future – marketing, textiles – electives."* They reported that *"sometimes there are not enough kids so a course doesn't get offered."* However, Vanier students were not the only ones who recognized that a certain number of students were needed to offer a course: *"sometimes with language courses, they say they will offer them and then there are not enough students to offer them."*

"The requirements for graduation just keep changing ... portfolios to graduation transitions, but it's just add-ons to what you are already doing."

- Grade 12 Student

Students also demonstrated awareness of what other schools offer. Students at Porter Creek were able to explain which English courses were offered at F. H. Collins but not at their own school: *"We look into FH and see what they offer – even switch schools for a semester."*

Most often students reported they could not access the course they wanted because of scheduling conflicts or because they did not have space in their timetables: *"I would like to have taken options – foods, metal work – but with the academic schedule I didn't have time;" "I wanted to take Literature but it wouldn't fit into my schedule;" "I want to take Psychology 12, but I won't have time in my timetable because of religion,"* and, *"don't have the most popular courses all at the same time."*

A number of students cited the issue of being at Wood Street for a semester and, therefore, missing a course they wanted to take that year: *"I wanted to take Foods, but because I was in ACES I had no time for it,"* and *"Physics was offered the same time as ES."* Other students had applied for Wood Street programs, but had not been accepted:

> *I applied for ES didn't get* accepted – *I would like more availability . . . my letter was good, but my teacher recommendation sucked. I had a good interview, but they said 'we can't let you in because of it' [the teacher recommendation].*

One girl who had wanted to take Sled Ed believed: *"Girls can't get into Sled Ed at Vanier."* However, by and large, students understood the realities of scheduling and class size. They were also savvy about the opportunities for shopping for courses across schools.

4. Desired Courses

The courses that students most often would like to be offered were those of a technical, vocational, practical, and/or artistic nature. The list included (in no particular order):

- Print-making
- Dance
- Fashion Design
- Photography
- Cosmetology
- Earth Sciences
- Meteorology
- Human Genome
- Leadership Course ("like Vanier")
- "Lots of trades programs"
- Work Experience

> *"I would like more trades – hairdressing – there's too much emphasis on academics."*
>
> - Grade 12 Student

A number of students also expressed the desire to have *"more combined courses like Experiential Science that has different subjects like biology and geography."* Courses that offered out of classroom experiences were also desired: *"I would like a course where I could go on a Bison hunt."*

5. New School Facility

Students had many ideas about what they would like to see in a new school facility. They identified some basic concepts that needed attention: light and bright colours; good acoustics; natural light and *"lights so it doesn't feel like a jail";* well controlled heating and ventilation; and, greenery. They wanted a welcoming place – "a place to hang out," "a central gathering area," "a student lounge." They liked the idea of curved walls and a building that had a centre, not too spread out, although one group liked the idea of a campus with various buildings, like a college or university. In addition, students wanted an environmentally friendly building, suggesting features such as solar panels.

Ease of moving around the building - without crowded hallways - was mentioned by all groups. They wanted a building of not more than two stories which was easily and navigated: *"My locker is in the science wing, so to get my coat after class and catch the bus, I can't. I have to bring my coat to class,"* and *"you should be able to find the office quickly."*

Students identified the need for rooms and spaces of differing sizes and shapes in order to accommodate different types of programs and activities. They listed important spaces such as a library and/or some other space for quiet work, a tutoring room, a multi-purpose lecture room, a working theatre, as well as exercise facilities including, but not limited to, a gymnasium. They wanted exercise facilities, possibly a weight room, climbing wall, and dance studio.

All groups identified the need for the school to support a healthy lifestyle, not only through exercise facilities, but also through a cafeteria with an emphasis on healthy food: *"In this era there is a lack of nutrition and exercise . . . we need more knowledge of nutrition plus physical activity," "everything is fast food and its too quick and easy," "need vegetarian alternatives."*

All groups identified the need for a "trades wing" or, alternatively, expanded and well-equipped technical vocational facilities. For example, one student explained: *"we need bigger automotive . . . look at what's coming up in the future for jobs, so if more trades are needed, make them a bigger section . . . start going into the future."*

Technology was another element valued by students, specifically good internet access, such as a wireless network in the school. Students also wanted the ability to work on the same files easily at home and around the school facility. A good communication system in the school itself (intercoms, television monitors) was another technological feature identified by students.

Other ideas included:

- a paved student parking lot with plug-ins for vehicles and easy street access ("good exits"),
- *"section for the Grade 8s, like a middle school for Grades 8 and 9,"*
- *"keep the Teen Parent Centre. Pregnant moms come here because they get daycare and can finish their education."*

The idea of having Wood Street programs in a new facility was met with some skepticism by students in the Wood Street group. The students in MAD particularly, were concerned that: "*We might be self-conscious and it would be distracting . . . we are allowed to leave and go to the bathroom, go for lunch. In a regular school setting this wouldn't be happening because we'd be walking through the halls."* However, the concern was more an issue of school rules and culture, rather than actual facilities.

In a number of groups, students expressed the desire to have some input into the design and/or decoration of the school: *"Let students paint murals," "get kids to help with the design."*

> *"Have a huge mural in a classroom, or write Shakespeare quotes on the walls . . . not a copy of the periodic table."*
> - Grade 12 Student

Overall, students wanted a welcoming environment, with a variety of spaces that would support different programs, courses, and activities. However, at the conclusion of one discussion, a student reminded us: *"you need very dedicated teachers if this is to be a special school."*

6. Issues Specific to Particular Groups

A focus group was conducted with WELS students at one school as they were not represented in the other focus group or in the responses to the student survey. When asked what they liked about school, WELS students could not identify anything they liked. One student said she had been at the school for five years and could *"hardly wait to leave . . . [then] I'm going to college next year."*

These students also expressed a desire for more access to computer labs at school: *"We don't get to go there much."* They believed that they did not get to do *"interesting stuff like music or computers"* and that school staff are *"always telling us what we are not supposed to do."*

The other group, with some unique experiences, was the girls and boys living at the Gadzoosdaa residence. They identified some disadvantages they faced coming from communities outside Whitehorse. For example, there noted that there was *"no semester system in the community so you are behind and you have catch up"* and that they did not always have specialty teachers in subjects, such as the Sciences, which also put them at a disadvantage. Some students believed they were placed in certain courses because they came from a community outside Whitehorse: *"they put me in lower Math because I'm from a community, but I wanted to take English."* Placement in courses was also perceived as a problem by another student who reported he was *"taking a Native language that isn't mine."*

Students in both the girls and boys groups identified features of being in the residence that had supported their school success including helpful staff, tutoring, study time, transportation, and the fact that *"you know people and everyone is in the same boat."* One girl reported; *"I didn't skip for the first three weeks!"* Another student had a comparative experience upon which to draw: *"I lived on my own before and it's better living here."*

Of course students had suggestions for change and improvement at Gadzoosdaa, including an *"orientation to the school and the city,"* as well as healthier food at the residence (*"too much deep fried," "need more vegetarian").* Some students wanted a later curfew and an easier sign out process, while other students believed there was a need to expand the facility.

7. Final Comments

Students in all groups were given the opportunity to make final comments or *suggestions regarding any of the issues discussed. Some students just expressed* frustration with their secondary school experiences:

- *"I don't like the whole set-up . . . make it so you enjoy coming here and then I will show up on time,"*
- *"I prefer to walk around in the cold than go to class,"*
- *"there's something said when the school makes it all geared up for graduation; that's for leaving and that's what they celebrate. Make us excited about staying."*

Others made suggestions regarding alternative timetables or schedules:

- *"The school start time . . . it's so much easier to come [this semester] because I have* a spare first thing in the morning."
- *"I heard kids' body clocks are different and schools are designed for adults."*
- *"Restructure the schedule . . . when you get two double blocks, cut it down because you can't focus for two hours,"*
- *"Year round [school] is an awesome idea."*

Other students raised the issue of their own schedules and trying to fit in school, homework and working.

- *"I work full time and then go home with eight hours of homework,"*
- *"Homework is the worst invention in the world. It's not helping anyone pass. School is its own universe. We're here doing work then they want you to go home and do homework, but you already work [part-time]. And then if you socialize, when do you sleep?"*

The need for more counselling to help students plan for their lives after secondary school was also identified as issue by a number of students:

- *"I am just going to wait for university. The school doesn't have much to offer me here. I think there should be a heavier focus on choosing university with your counselor and learning about university. For me, some applications dates had already passed and scholarship dates had already passed [before I found out* about them],"
- *"We need more counselors for Grade 12. Seems like 80% of the counselor time is juggling courses for kids who haven't earned it, working with troubled kids. They need to work with kids who are going to university; kids who have earned it."*
- *"I don't think we get enough information on university but there is even less on trades."*

While some students felt teachers spent too much time on struggling students, others believed it was the high achieving students who received the most attention.

- *"Teachers will help the A students but not the kids who are struggling. You are not giving the struggling students the help they need and they may not have the help at home."*
- *"Need to offer higher levels – maybe IB – [because] teachers are focused on the bottom levels."*

One group turned the discussion to the issue of segregation.

- *"Integration of the First Nations aspect [needs to happen]. Maybe I am the only one that sees it. They [First Nations students] are not in the academic classes. They go to classes and the students are struggling. I see racism . . . maybe it's unconscious."*
- *"There is segregation. I know it happens everywhere, but in some classes you will see everyone is First Nations and in other classes everyone is white."*

Again, the issue of more "hands on" learning opportunities was raised by students in all groups. One student used the example of his cadet training to make a point about program structure and delivery.

- *"Everyone in this room is really academic and not a lot of them see a point. So if there were more programs to make school more interesting, more hands-on [that would help]."*
- *"We need the same courses, but taught in different ways . . . more interactive, like MAD."*
- *"With my cadet training people weren't on board when it started out but then they took the whole program and re-vamped it . . . made it more outdoors, hands-on, and the number of people skyrocketed."*

The consultants also asked for students' opinions regarding a proposed student survey. All groups agreed that a student survey should be web-based and gave suggestions regarding administration: *"classes should be scheduled to go to the labs to complete the survey."*[427]

All groups provided thoughtful comments that reflected their own experiences in secondary school. They had some criticisms and suggestions for improvement, as well as positive descriptions of particular classes and teachers. Virtually all discussion was conducted in a frank, constructive, respectful – and sometimes humourous – manner.

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[427] The students' suggestions were reflected in the administration instructions to schools and, in fact, corresponded to the processes that Proactive has found to be successful in other Canadian schools.

F. OTHER ACTIVITIES

The three consultants attended a meeting of the **First Nations Education Advisory Committee** (FNEAC). The meeting was primarily to introduce the process, answer questions, and obtain advice from the Committee regarding community visits. However, a number of issues were discussed that warrant documentation in this report.

Members of the FNEAC described how many "gap" students are First Nations and how the transition from communities to Whitehorse schools is particularly difficult. Teachers should visit the communities, with tutors and mentors preparing the students for the transition. Adding to the difficulty, the English spoken in Whitehorse was thought to be a more "Western" English than that spoken in the communities. The issue of culturally appropriate assessment was also raised with a suggestion being that the life skills that young people have gained in their communities should be recognized and valued.

Two of the consultants from Proactive were also able to attend part of the **Transitions Day** jointly attended by the Yukon First Nations Advisory Committee and the Association of Yukon School Administrators. Stories of successful and promising initiatives were shared.

In summary, one strong theme was the fact that transitions depend on relationships. For the transition from elementary to secondary school, students need to be connected with someone at their new school. (It was reported that F. H. Collins has peer mentors who help with transition.) Other factors that support successful transitions from the communities to Whitehorse were articulated as:

- an established peer group,
- a stable 'family' environment (recognizing that students will not usually be living with a parent),
- a support person in the school students can trust, such as the CELC,
- a positive role model in the school,
- a school community where First Nations students can "find a place,"
- support for the traditional arts, such as carving and drumming,
- a school staff that discusses plans, successes and challenges with First Nation students.

In addition, the need to find new ways for parents to be in Whitehorse with their children was mentioned, as was the lack of common understanding of what 'graduation' means in Yukon. People believed there is confusion regarding the difference between graduation and a school leaving certificate. Both these issues were echoed in the later community visits.

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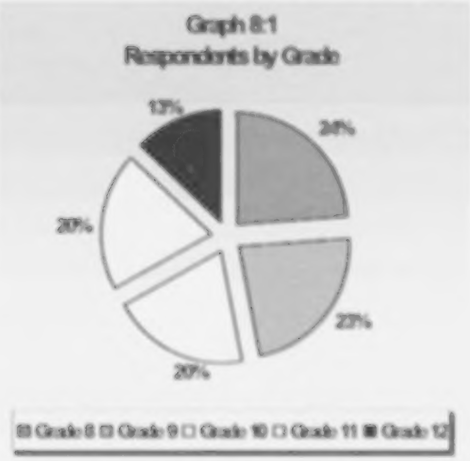
CHAPTER 8: SURVEYS

A. STUDENT SURVEY

1. Demographic Characteristics

As previously mentioned, 891 secondary students in Whitehorse completed the questionnaire; 413 from Porter Creek Secondary, 235 from Vanier Catholic Secondary, 207 from F.H. Collins Secondary, as well as 36 students attending Wood Street.[428] Overall, 12% of non-Wood Street respondents had, at some time, attended Wood Street. Of the total respondent group, 54% were male and 46% were female. Respondents represented students in grade 8 to grade 12 (Graph 8:1). For purposes of analysis, grade 8 was run separately, grade 9 and 10 were combined, and grade 11 and 12 were combined.


Graph 8:1
Respondents by Grade

Almost all students (96%) reported that they lived with parent(s)/guardian(s). While 17 students (2%), indicated that they lived at Gadzoosdaa Residence, the responses of these students to certain questions have been analyzed separately. A number of other respondent groups were also split out for analytical purposes including those students taking a First Nations course (36 students), those in an English as a Second Language class (65 students), those taking a technical vocational course (46 students), students in pre-apprenticeship (33 students), students in the WELS program (23 students) students who were attending secondary school away from their home community (89 students), and those in French Immersion (79 students).

Overall, 29% rated themselves as being an "above average" student, 62% saw themselves as "average," while 9% indicated "below average." Students were also asked a series of questions about their school experience which represent "risk factors;" that is, the likelihood of students not being successful at school. Using these questions, a risk variable was created to place students in high, moderate or low risk categories.[429] This analysis placed 37 students at high risk,[430] 350 at moderate risk, and 504 at low risk. Of the high risk group, 51% rated themselves as "below average" in school.

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[428] Schools were provided their own results. Results for specific schools are not included in this report.
[429] Questions 11 a,b,d,e and Question 12 were used to create the risk variables.
[430] It should also be recognized that high risk students are less likely to have completed the questionnaire, as they are more likely to have been absent from school during the administration period.

2. School Size and Course Options

When asked about the size of their current school 85% of secondary students believed the size of their current school was "about right." Across the three Whitehorse secondary schools "about right" ranged from 74% to 92%. There were no significant differences by grade, gender, or other demographic characteristics. However, 19% of the high risk group, believed the school they attended was "too big;" the highest percentage of any group. Of the students who felt their school was too big or too small, the most frequent complaint was that the facility was "too crowded" (45 students).

Because concern is expressed that secondary students may be limited in their course selection, students were asked whether they were satisfied with the course options available at their school. Overall, 86% were satisfied with the range among the three schools being from 79% to 89%. Again, there were no remarkable differences by the various demographic characteristics with the exception of the risk variable; 92% of the low risk students were satisfied, as compared to 73% of the high risk students.

When dissatisfied students (125 students) were asked about other courses they would like, the top four choices were "more technical/vocational (practical arts) options" (83 students), "a greater variety of language courses" (56 students), "apprenticeship opportunities" (53 students), and "environmental studies" (51 students).

Approximately a third of students (31%) indicated there was an existing course or program they would have liked to take but were unable to do so. Grade 11 and 12 students were most likely to have had this experience (38%), as were high risk students (38%), students who were from another community (47%) and those in the WELS program (43%). Although a wide range of such courses was listed by students and the numbers citing each were small, the courses most often identified were metal working (20 students), mechanics (18 students), woodworking (17 students), Food Studies (14 students), and Photography (14 students).

The reason most often given for not being able to take the desired course was that the scheduling conflicted with another course that the student needed (109 students). The second most frequent reason, given far less often, was that the course was not offered at their current school (35 students).

3. School Experience

Students were asked a number of questions about their school experiences. For example, they were asked to think about the favourite course/program that they had taken in the previous two years and indicate why it was their favourite. Differences were evident among certain groups of students (Table 8:1).

Table 8:1
Reason for Favourite Course by Overall and Selected Group*

Reason	Overall (n=891) Rank	Not in Home Community (n=89)	Taking Technical Vocational Course (n=46)	Taking Pre-Apprenticeship (n=33)	High Risk (n=37)
I am interested in the subject	59% (1)	49% (1)	59% (1)	52% (2)	54% (2)
Hands-on/interactive	53% (2)	43%	59% (1)	64% (1)	38% (3)
The teacher loved teaching the subject/was enthusiastic	42% (3)	46% (2)	48% (3)	36% (3)	30%
Freedom to be myself in the class	36%	45% (3)	35%	33%	59% (1)
The teacher was very knowledgeable	23%	21%	17%	33%	16%
Teacher cared about me as an individual	16%	15%	13%	12%	27%
The integrated/experiential nature of the program	12%	11%	15%	24%	8%

* *Students were given the option of selecting up to three reasons; therefore, column percentages add up to more than 100%.*

Students who identified being in technical vocational and pre-apprenticeship were more likely to give the reason that the course was "hands-on/interactive." The pre-apprenticeship students also valued what they perceived as the integrated or experiential nature of the course. Students in the high risk group, and to some extent those who were not living in their home community, valued the "freedom to be myself in the class." The high risk students were also more likely than other groups to identify the fact that the "teacher cared about me as an individual."[431]

Students were also asked about their comfort level when they started at their current school. While no remarkable differences were visible by grade or gender, there were differences among some groups, particularly with the students in WELS[432] programs, as well as variations by level of risk (Graph 8:2). While WELS students felt welcomed by their teachers when they started school, they did not feel happy coming to school nor comfortable with other students. Those at high and moderate risk were not happy coming to school and did not feel particularly welcomed by teachers, especially those students at high risk.

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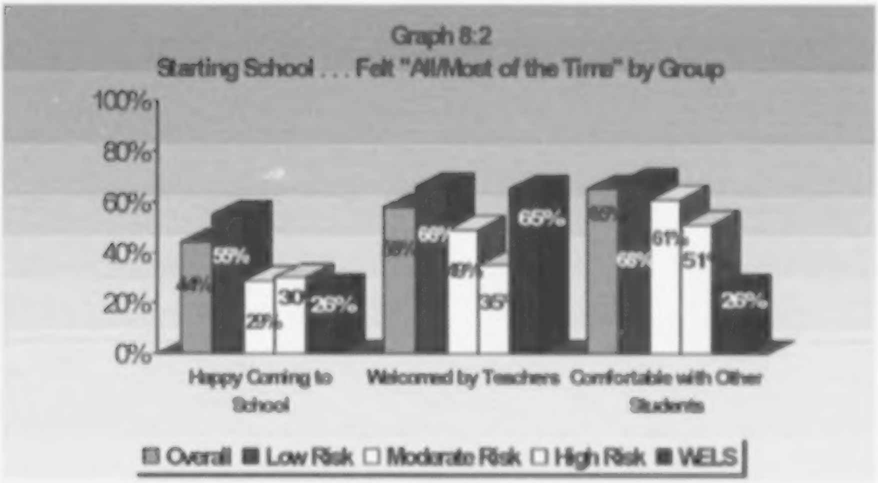
[431] All numbers and percentages are found in Appendix ??

[432] It should be recognized that the number of students in WELS programs responding to the survey was small (n=23).



Graph 8:2
Starting School . . . Felt "All/Most of the Time" by Group

A number of other questions were asked of students regarding their school experiences and engagement at school. The only noticeable difference by grade or gender was that females (61%) were more likely than males (51%) to agree that "students have a say in classroom decisions that affect them." Again, differences by risk group were evident (Table 7.2). On virtually every item, students in the high risk group were less likely to agree or to indicate that the statement was true "all/almost all/most of the time." For example, 94% of low risk students agreed that staff care about students, as compared to 83% of moderate risk students, and 73% of high risk students. In some cases the differences between low and high risk students were even greater; 90% of low risk students felt safe at school "all/almost all/most" of the time, as compared to 68% of high risk students; 78% of low risk students liked coming to school "all/almost all/most" of the time, compared to 35% of high risk students.

Table 8:2
Attitudes Towards School Overall and by Risk Group

Agreement (strongly agree/agree combined)	Overall (n=891)	Low Risk (n=504)	Moderate Risk (n=350)	High Risk* (n=37)
Staff in this school care about students.	89%	**94%**	**83%**	**73%**
Students in this school care about one another.	59%	67%	49%	41%
Students respect staff.	61%	68%	52%	49%
Staff respect students.	83%	89%	74%	73%
Staff treat students as individuals.	75%	78%	70%	65%
This school helps students respect individual differences.	77%	83%	71%	51%
This school helps students respect cultural differences.	81%	85%	75%	78%

Agreement **(strongly agree/agree combined)**	**Overall (n=891)**	**Low Risk (n=504)**	**Moderate Risk (n=350)**	**High Risk* (n=37)**
Teachers hold high expectations for my academic performance.	84%	89%	79%	68%
I have enough opportunities for experiential learning.	75%	80%	71%	54%
I have enough opportunities for learning outside the actual school building.	71%	75%	67%	57%
There is an adult in this school I would go to if I needed help with school work.	78%	82%	73%	68%
There is an adult in this school I would go to if I needed help with personal issues.	53%			
I feel I "belong" at this school.	80%	87%	72%	57%
I am proud of this school.	79%	85%	73%	59%

True at School **(all/almost all/most of the time combined)**	**Overall (n=891)**	**Low Risk (n=504)**	**Moderate Risk (n=350)**	**High Risk* (n=37)**
Students are recognized for their individual achievements.	71%	75%	67%	57%
Students have a say in school decisions that affect them.	51%	55%	45%	38%
Students have a say in classroom decisions that affect them.	56%	63%	46%	49%
The school does things to make new students feel welcome.	66%	70%	62%	57%
I feel safe at this school.	84%	90%	76%	68%
I like coming to this school.	67%	78%	54%	35%
I feel happy at this school.	71%	80%	60%	41%

* *The comparatively small number of students in this group should be recognized when viewing the percentages.*

Students in technical vocational and pre-apprenticeship courses were more likely than other students to agree that students care about one another (70% for both) and that they feel happy at school (83% and 88% respectively), but were less likely to indicate that students have a say in classroom decisions that affect them (46% and 42% respectively).

Students who were not going to school in their home community were less likely to agree that staff care about students (79%) and that the school helps students respect individual (64%) and cultural differences (70%). They were also less likely to say that they like coming to school (43%) and that they were happy at school (46%).

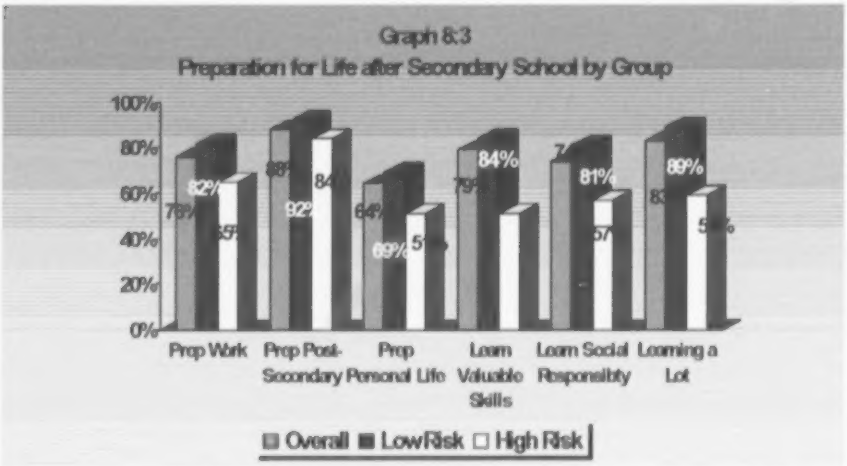
Students living at Gadzoosdaa Residence were less likely to believe that teachers hold high expectations for their academic performance (65%). They also did not think they had enough opportunities for experiential learning (59%) and they were less likely to indicate pride in their school (59%). As a sub-group of the group not from Whitehorse, they were also less likely than the overall population to indicate they like coming to school (35%) or that they were happy at school (41%).

WELS students were more likely to indicate that students are recognized for their individual achievements (91%) and that they have a say in classroom decisions that affect them (70%). They also believed that teachers hold high expectations for their academic performance (91%). However, they were less likely to feel safe (71%) or happy (57%) at school.

When overall student responses on many questions are compared to the typical responses to these items by secondary students elsewhere in Canada, the responses are comparable and in some cases particularly positive. (One area for improvement is the fact that only about half the secondary students responding to the survey indicated there was an adult in the school they would go to if they needed help with personal issues.) However, it is particularly important to pay attention to the sub-groups of students whose secondary school experience is not as welcoming or engaging.

4. Preparation for Life After Secondary School

Students were asked a number of questions about what they were learning at school and how well the school was preparing them for life after secondary school, including preparation for work, for post-secondary and for their personal life. Graph 8:3 shows the responses of the overall population compared to the students in the low risk and high risk groups.



A few other differences were noted among groups. Students in English as a Second Language classes were more likely to indicate that courses in the school were helping prepare them for their personal life after school (78%), whereas Grade 11 and 12 students were less likely to do so (52%). Students in French Immersion were more likely to agree they were learning skills that will be valuable throughout their lives (80%).

5. Areas Very Important at Secondary School

Students, as well as school staff and community members, were asked to indicate from a list of 18 items, which were **very** important for secondary schools to provide to students. Items included the development of particular skills, knowledge and attitudes, as well as supports for students. Table 8:3 shows the top 10 items and the differences across selected sub-groups.

Table 8:3
Ranking and Percentage of VERY Important Overall and by Selected Group

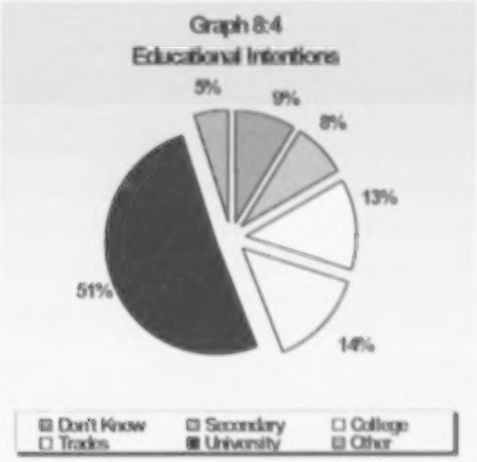
VERY Important for Secondary Schools to Provide for Students *(--- indicates not in the top 10)*	**Overall (n=891)**	**Taking First Nations Language Course (n=36)**	**Taking Technical Vocational (n=46)**	**School Not in Home Community (n=89)**
Skills for Secondary School Success	1 (92%)	2 (92%)	1 (98%)	2 (84%)
Career Information	2 (91%)	4 (86%)	3 (91%)	1 (88%)
Job-related Skills	3 (89%)	5 (83%)	2 (96%)	3 (81%)
Advice on Course Choices	4 (87%)	--- (75%)	6 (80%)	3 (81%)
Advice relating to Graduation Plan	4 (87%)	5 (83%)	7 (76%)	7 (78%)
Post-Secondary Education Information	6 (86%)	--- (69%)	5 (87%)	7 (78%)
Academic Preparation for Post-Secondary	7 (85%)	--- (75%)	6 (78%)	9 (76%)
Opportunities for Learning Outside the School Building	8 (84%)	2 (92%)	4 (89%)	3 (81%)
Understanding of Healthy Lifestyles and Health Choices	9 (83%)	1 (94%)	8 (70%)	--- (75%)
Apprenticeship Opportunities	10 (81%)	5 (83%)	3 (91%)	6 (79%)
Personal Counselling	--- (65%)	--- (67%)	9 (67%)	--- (55%)
Financial Planning for Life After School	--- (80%)	3 (89%)	9 (67%)	9 (76%)
Knowledge of Yukon First Nations Culture and History	--- (46%)	5 (83%)	--- (28%)	--- (47%)
How to Work as Part of a Team	--- (76%)	5 (83%)	9 (67%)	--- (72%)
Personal Citizenship Responsibilities	--- (70%)	5 (83%)	--- (65%)	--- (65%)

While skills for secondary school success is in the top one or two for all groups, students taking First Nations Language Courses ranked understanding healthy lifestyles and health choices higher. Opportunities for learning outside the school building and financial planning for life after high school were also highly ranked. Opportunities for learning outside the school building were also highly ranked by students whose home community was not Whitehorse. Job-related skills, apprenticeship opportunities and career information were among the top ranked for students taking technical vocational courses.

The items least likely to be viewed as important were: knowledge of First Nations culture and history (46%); community service experience (54%); and, advice on how to better communicate with teachers (56%).

No remarkable differences were visible by grade level. There were some percentage differences between males and females: 87% of females as compared to 79% of males thought understanding of healthy lifestyles and health choices was very important; 80% of females as compared to 72% of males thought advice on how to balance school with other aspects of their lives was very important; and, 70% of females compared to 62% of males believed personal counselling was very important for secondary schools to offer. In addition, 59% of females as compared to 50% of males felt community service experience was very important.

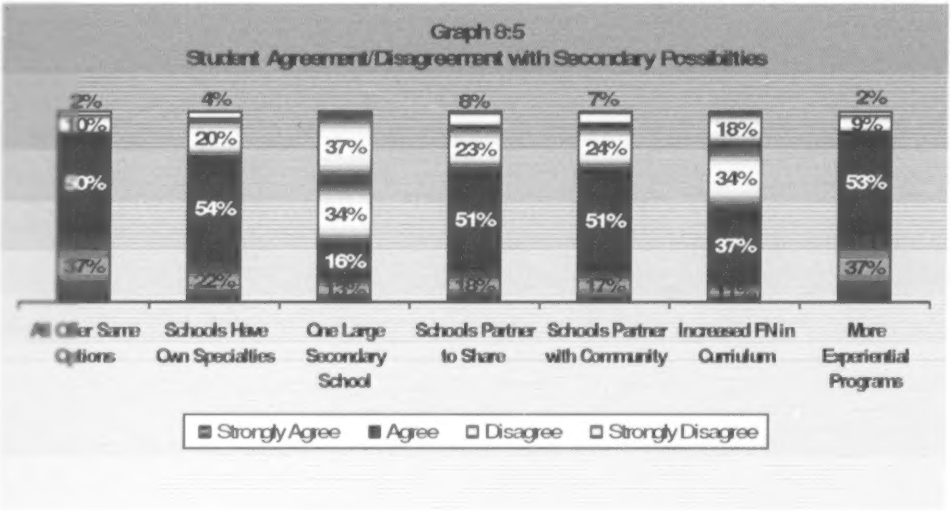
6. Educational Intentions



Students were asked to indicate the highest level of education they planned on achieving. Approximately half of the respondents indicated a university degree (Graph 8:4). Females (60%) were more likely than males (44%) to make this prediction; a trend that is evident in recent university enrolment. Similarly 63% of students at low risk intended to gain a university degree, as compared to 38% of students at moderate risk, and 16% of students at high risk. High risk students were most likely to report their highest level of education would be completed secondary school. One third of students in a First Nations Language course also indicated that secondary school would be their highest level of education. In comparison, 68% of students in French Immersion intended on obtaining a university degree.

7. Directions for Secondary Education in Whitehorse

Students were asked a series of questions relating to future directions for secondary education in Whitehorse. These same items were included on the staff and community questionnaires. Graph 8:5 illustrates the student responses to each item.



Students were most likely to agree with having more experiential programs and were least likely to agree with the idea of one large secondary school in Whitehorse. Students agreed with the notion of schools partnering with each other, as well as with community to share programs and facilities. They agreed that school should offer the same options as much as possible while, at the same time, having specialties. Grade 8 students (87%) were most likely to agree that secondary schools should have their own specialties, while Grade 11 and 12 students were least likely to agree (69%). Students were divided on the need for an increase in the integration of First Nations' knowledge, culture, and history into the curriculum; Grade 8 students were most likely to agree (57%) and Grade 11 and 12 students least likely to agree (43%). Fifty-nine percent of students in the high risk group would like to see a greater integration of First Nations knowledge, culture, and history.

B. STAFF SURVEY

1. Demographic Characteristics

A total of 136 staff responded to the survey; 36 from F.H. Collins Secondary School, 64 from Porter Creek Secondary School, 32 from Vanier Catholic Secondary School, and four at Wood Street Centre. Of the 136, 109 were educators, while 27 were other adults working in the school (including educational assistants, CELCs/ESWs, and other support staff). Thirty had been in the school two or fewer years, while the remainder had been in the school for longer with 32% reporting 10 years or more.

2. School Size

When asked about the size of their current school 80% of respondents believed the size of their current school was "about right," while another 10% responded "don't know/no opinion." Six people believed that there were not enough students to provide all the necessary course options, while three people felt the building was too small/too crowded for the number of students.

3. Areas Very Important at Secondary School

School staff were asked to indicate which things were **very** important for secondary schools to provide to students. Items included the development of particular skills, knowledge and attitudes, as well as supports for students. Table 8:4 shows the top 10 items and differences between educators and other adults working in the school.

Table 8:4
Ranking and Percentage of VERY Important Overall and by Group

VERY Important for Secondary Schools to Provide Students *(--- indicates not in the top 10)*	Overall (n=136)	Educators (n=109)	Other Adults (n=27)
Skills for Secondary School Success	1 (99%)	1 (98%)	1 (100%)
Advice on Course Choices	2 (90%)	2 (90%)	5 (89%)
Academic Preparation for Post-Secondary	2 (90%)	4 (89%)	3 (96%)
Job-related Skills	4 (89%)	6 (86%)	1 (100%)
Personal Citizenship Responsibilities	4 (89%)	2 (90%)	9 (85%)
Post-Secondary Education Information	6 (88%)	5 (87%)	5 (89%)
How to Work as Part of a Team	7 (86%)	6 (86%)	9 (85%)
Career Information	8 (86%)	6 (86%)	9 (85%)
Apprenticeship Opportunities	9 (85%)	9 (83%)	4 (93%)
Advice Relating to Graduation Plan	10 (84%)	9 (83%)	9 (89%)
Advice on How to Better Communicate with Teachers	--- (75%)	--- (72%)	5 (89%)
Opportunities for learning Outside the School Building	--- (76%)	--- (73%)	9 (85%)

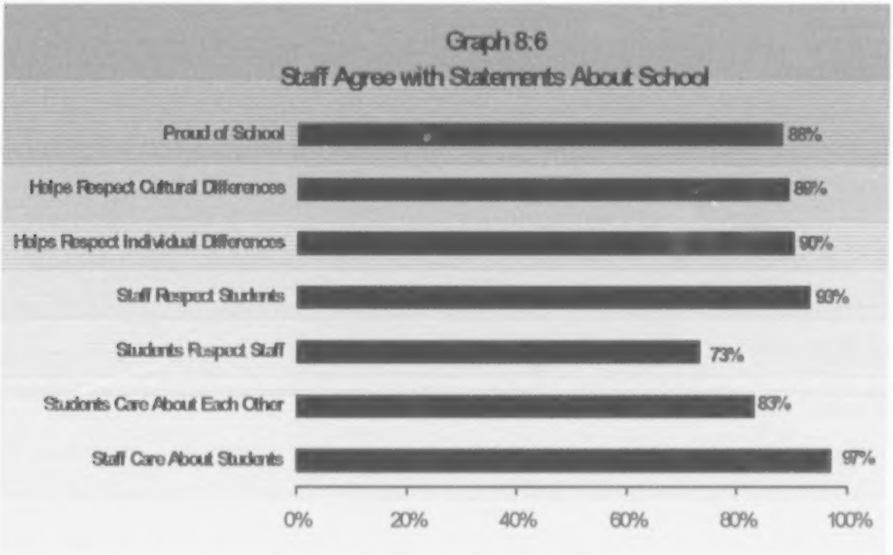
Job-related skills and apprenticeship opportunities were ranked more highly by other adults working in the school than by educators. Educators ranked personal citizenship responsibilities and advice on course choices more highly than the other adults.

When the data were analyzed by whether the person had been working in the school for more than two years or less than two years, a number of differences emerged. Those who were newer to the school were more likely to think advice on balancing school and other aspects of life was very important (87% vs. 75%). Those who had been working in the school longer were more likely to choose personal citizenship responsibilities (92% vs. 80%), post-secondary information (91% vs. 77%), academic preparation for post-secondary (92% vs. 83%), and community service experience (78% vs. 57%).

Knowledge of Yukon First Nations culture and history (63%) and financial planning for life after high school (71%) were the lowest ranked overall.

4. Staff Opinions of Their School

Almost all staff were proud of their school and believed the school helped students respect both individual and cultural differences (Graph 8:6). They also indicated that staff care about and respect students. They were less likely to agree that students care about each other and respect staff.

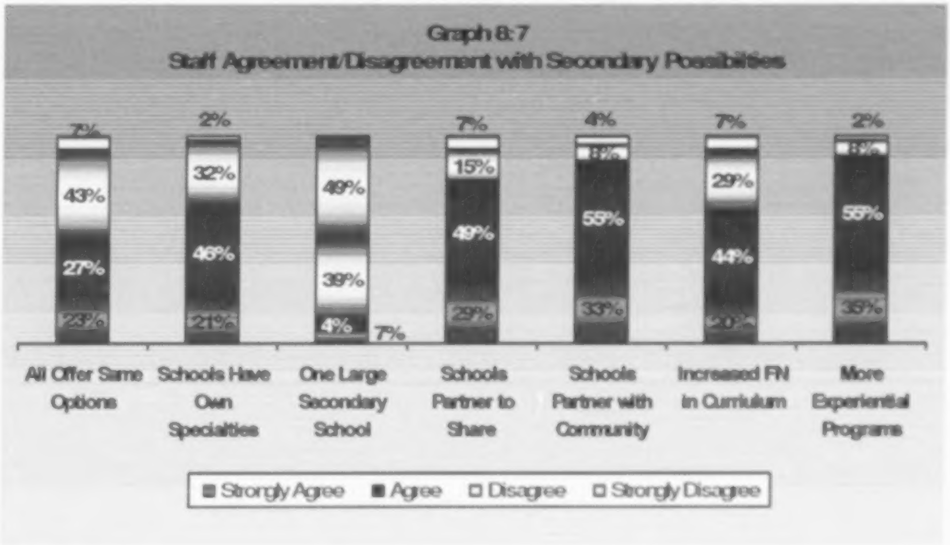


Graph 8:6
Staff Agree with Statements About School

Staff newer to the school were even less likely to agree that students in the school care about one another (73%) and that students respect staff (63%). Also, other adults working in the school were the least likely to agree that students respect staff (56%).

5. Directions for Secondary Education in Whitehorse

Staff were asked the same questions as were students and community regarding future directions for secondary education in Whitehorse (Graph 8:7).



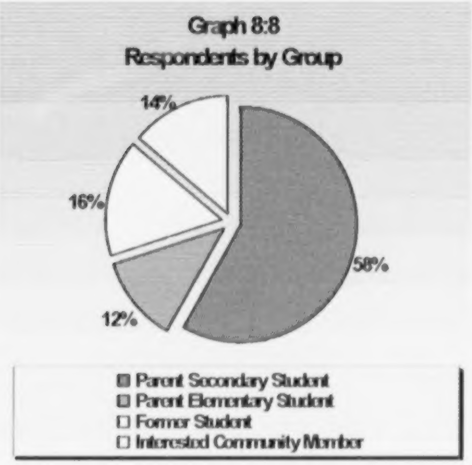
As did students, staff were most likely to agree with the need for more experiential programs and were least likely to agree with the idea of one large secondary school in Whitehorse. Staff supported partnering among schools and even more strongly agreed with partnering with community to share facilities and programs. About two-thirds of staff also agreed that there should be increased integration of First Nations knowledge, culture and history in the curriculum. Staff were more likely to agree that schools should have their own specialties than that all schools should offer the same options as much as possible.

Staff were generally consistent in their responses. The one area of difference was that other adults working in the school were somewhat more likely to agree that schools should offer the same options (67% agreement as compared to 50% agreement overall). Those who had worked in the school for a shorter period of time were less likely to agree (43%).

C. COMMUNITY SURVEY

1. Demographic Characteristics

In total, 85 Yukoners responded to the Community Survey; all but six did so on-line through the link provided on the Department of Education's home page. Ninety-one percent of respondents were residents of Whitehorse.


Graph 8:8
Respondents by Group

Respondents were asked to indicate in what capacity they were responding to the questionnaire. The largest respondent group was parents/guardians of a student currently attending secondary school in Whitehorse (Graph 8:8).

Approximately one-quarter of all respondents (24%) indicated that they had a child in French Immersion. Only one respondent had a child in a WELS program; one had a child in an English as a Second Language class; and, one had a child in pre-apprenticeship. Two respondents had a child taking a First Nations Language course and three had a child taking a technical vocational course.

2. Secondary Parents: School Size and Course Options

Those respondents who indicated they currently had a child attending a secondary school in Whitehorse were asked to think about the size of the student population at that school; 76% indicated they believe the size was "about right." No respondents indicated the size was too small, 12% thought the size was "too big," while the other 12% responded "don't know."

Overall, 74% of these respondents were satisfied with the course options available to their child at his/her school. Of the quarter who were dissatisfied (n=13): 12 would like a greater variety of specialty science courses; 11 would like environmental studies to be offered; 11 would like business/marketing courses; 9 would like a greater variety of language courses; 8 would like more technical/vocational courses; 8 would like more apprenticeship opportunities; and 4 would like more courses with a First Nations focus.

3. Employers: Preparation for the Employment

Those who identified themselves as being someone who employed young people who have attended secondary school in Whitehorse (n=13) were asked how well these young people were prepared in terms of a variety of skills and competencies. Overall, employers were not particularly positive about the preparation of young people for the workplace. However, the top areas where the majority of employers indicated youth had been prepared "very well/well" were:

- Ability to work comfortably with co-workers (n=9),
- Reading skills needed in the workplace (n=8),
- Communicate well with others (n=7),
- Respect people's diversity and individual differences (n=7),
- Carry out assigned tasks (n=7).

In terms of the qualities which the majority of employers reported "not very well/not well at all," the most frequent were:

- Know employer's expectations (n=10),
- Perform high quality work (n=8),
- Technical skills needed in the workplace (n=8),
- Manage time well (n=8),
- Work well under pressure (n=8)
- Apply the skills learned in the classroom (n=7),
- Organizational skills needed in the workplace (n=7),
- Work with minimal supervision (n=7),
- Meet deadlines (n=7),
- Be open to suggestions (7).

A number of the aspects where employers were not satisfied concerned the ability of young people to work independently, managing their own work.

4. Areas Very Important at Secondary School

The same items were given to community members to determine which ones they believed were VERY important for secondary schools to offer (Table 8:5).

Table 8:5
Ranking and Percentage of VERY Important Overall and by Selected Group

VERY Important for Secondary Schools to Provide for Students *(--- indicates not in the top 10)*	Overall* (n=85)	Parent of Secondary Student* (n=49)	Parent of Elementary Student (n=10)	Former Whitehorse Secondary Student (n=14)	Interested Community Member (n=12)
Skills for Secondary School Success	1 (95%)	1 (100%)	3	5	1
Advice on Course Choices	1 (95%)	2 (98%)	3	1	3
Post-Secondary Education Information	3 (93%)	3 (94%)	3	1	3
Academic Preparation for Post-Secondary	4 (92%)	4 (92%)	1	3	3
Career Information	5 (88%)	6 (88%)	7	3	1
Advice Relating to Graduation Plan	6 (85%)	5 (90%)	1	---	10
Opportunities for Learning Outside the School Building	7 (81%)	8 (80%)	7	5	3
Understanding of Healthy Lifestyles and Health Choices	7 (81%)	7 (84%)	7	---	3

VERY Important for Secondary Schools to Provide for Students (--- indicates not in the top 10)	Overall* (n=85)	Parent of Secondary Student* (n=49)	Parent of Elementary Student (n=10)	Former Whitehorse Secondary Student (n=14)	Interested Community Member (n=12)
Apprenticeship Opportunities	9 (80%)	8 (80%)	---	5	3
Advice on How to Balance School with Other Aspects of Lives	--- (75%)	--- (73%)	7	10	10
Financial Planning for Life After School	--- (74%)	--- (76%)	---	3	10
Community Service Experience	--- (74%)	--- (76%)	7	---	10
How to Work as Part of a Team	--- (73%)	--- (71%)	3	---	10
Personal Citizenship Responsibilities	--- (69%)	--- (71%)	---	---	3

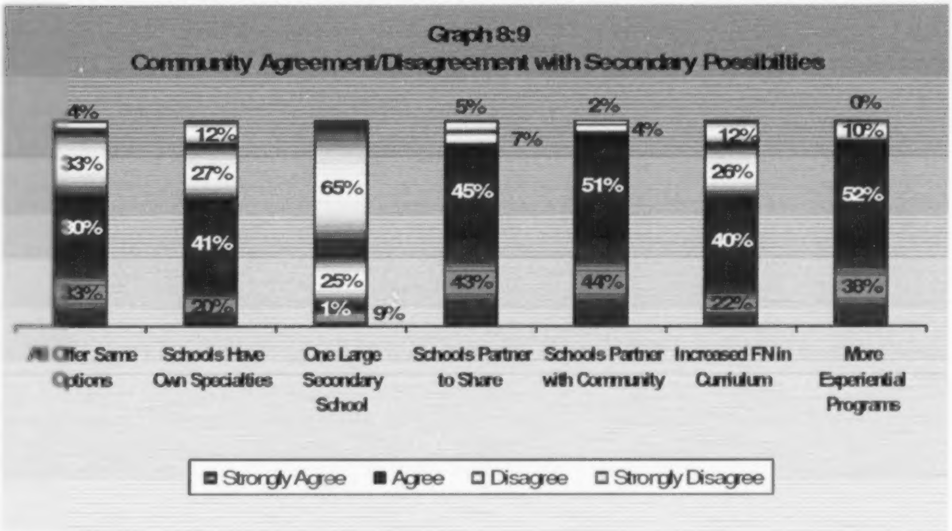
* *Percentages have been shown for the overall category and for parents of secondary students. The other groups are too small to show percentages, so only rank is shown.*

A few differences are evident as community members placing higher importance on personal citizenship responsibilities, the provision of apprenticeship opportunities, healthy lifestyles, and opportunities to learn outside the school building. Community members and former students also were more likely than parents to believe that knowledge of First Nations culture and history were very important for schools to provide.

6. Directions for Secondary Education in Whitehorse

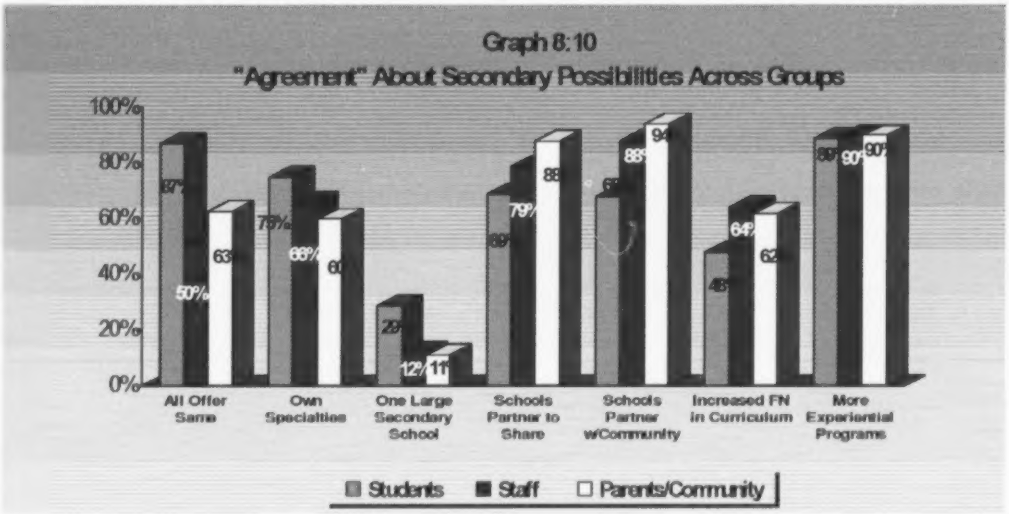
Community members were asked the same questions regarding future directions for secondary education in Whitehorse (Graph 8:9). Community members strongly disagreed with the idea of one large secondary school in Whitehorse, while they strongly supported partnerships both among schools and between schools and community. There was slightly more agreement that schools should offer the same options as much as possible, although over half also supported schools having specialties. Ninety percent also agreed with that schools should provide more experiential programming, while approximately 60% also supported increased integration of First Nations knowledge, culture and history.

The only remarkable differences among groups were that former Whitehorse secondary students were more likely than others to agree with having one large secondary school in Whitehorse, while interested community members were more likely to agree with increased emphasis on First Nations knowledge, culture and history in secondary schools.



D. COMPARATIVE SUMMARY

Across all groups there was a belief that the size of the secondary schools in Whitehorse was currently "about right." This response, coupled with strong disagreement by all groups that "there should be one large secondary school in Whitehorse," suggests that any new building should be a replacement for an existing secondary school and not the creation of a "super school" (Graph 8:10).



There was a mix of agreement about what schools should offer, suggesting that all should offer many programs in common, but schools should also have some unique or specialty programs. However, sharing or programs and facilities between schools and between schools and community were viewed positively. While about half of the student respondents agreed with an increased emphasis on First Nations knowledge, culture, and history, approximately over 60% of staff and parents/community agreed.

There was universal agreement (approximately 90% of all groups) that secondary schools should offer more experiential programs, perhaps consistent with the response of students and community that opportunities for learning outside the school building were very important.

While all groups agreed that it was very important for secondary schools to provide students the skills for secondary school success, students ranked job-related skills more highly than other groups. Across different student sub-groups there were also important differences, suggesting that the traditional focus on academic preparation for post-secondary, ranked highly by staff, needs to be balanced by the recognition of other career paths after high school. Of note is the high ranking of the importance of apprenticeship opportunities by students taking technical vocational courses, as well as the different priorities of students taking First Nations Language courses.

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CHAPTER 9:
COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

A. CONTENT

On June 20, 2008 and June 23, 2008, community consultations were held in Whitehorse in order to obtain community members' reactions to some possible scenarios for the future of secondary programming and facilities in Whitehorse. People were not asked to rank or choose their preferred scenario, rather they were asked which elements of each scenario they liked or disliked. (Refer to the Methodology, pp. 28-29, for more information regarding the process.) The three scenarios were presented as follows.

SCENARIO 1

A New Secondary School Focused on Authentic Learning which includes:

- Experiential Programming/Learning
- A Strong First Nations Component
- French Immersion Programming
- A 'Language Nest' - French, First Nations' Languages, Spanish, EAL/ESL
- A Grade 8-9 'school within a school' to ease transition into a large secondary school.

The Existing Secondary Schools will:

- Maintain the strengths of existing programming

SCENARIO 2

A New Secondary Technical Vocational School which includes:

- A Focus on Academic Programming related to College, Apprenticeship and the Trades
- Enhanced state of the art technical vocational facilities
- Enhanced Cooperative Education Programming and enhanced Apprenticeship opportunities
- A Grade 8-9 'school within a school' to ease transition into large secondary school

A Grade 8 to 12 French Immersion School Which Includes:

- A focus on University Entrance Academic Programming

The Existing Secondary Schools will:

- Maintain the strengths of existing programming
- Focus on University Entrance Academic Programming

SCENARIO 3

A New Individualized Secondary School which includes:

- Individualized programming planned for each student with a teacher/advisor - each Grade 10-12 student is on an individualized learning plan
  - Individualized Student Learning Plans take advantage of:
    - Virtual Learning opportunities
    - Experiential programming offered in Whitehorse
    - Project-based learning
    - Modularized Learning
    - Credit for community service and work experience
  - Optional scheduling - students have the flexibility to complete secondary school at a faster or slower pace:
    - Year Round schooling??
    - ¼ system??
- A Grade 8-9 'school within a school' to ease transition into large secondary school
- French Immersion Programming included in Grades 10 to 12

A K to 9 French Immersion School

The Existing Secondary Schools will:

- Maintain the strengths of existing programming
- Have enhanced Technical Vocational Facilities which are different in each school

B. DISCUSSION OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Thirty-five people attended the consultation and provided feedback, although not everyone commented on all three scenarios.

5. Scenario 1 – Authentic Learning

People most often liked Scenario 1 for its focus on authentic learning or "experiential programming" (n=10) and the "strong First Nations component" (n=8). The language nest and the "school within a school" concepts also received positive comments (n=6 for each). The element most frequently (although not often) called into question was *"how do you keep academically competitive/uniform curriculum when you have a First Nations focus?"*

> *"Barriers to education are behind us, not in front of us, if the spiritually damaged can be helped to learn."*
>
> - Community Resident at the Public Consultation

The questions asked also tended to centre on the First Nations focus, such as teachers knowing enough about First Nations history and issues to integrate these aspects into curriculum and where to find First Nations speakers who can write in the languages. Two people wanted a course specific to First Nations traditions and two people asked why there was not a strong arts/music focus in the scenario.

In their final comments or suggestions the issue of entrance into Wood Street was raised by four people – *"need more spots at Wood Street for at risk kids, not just the top achievers."* A number of other comments also addressed First Nations issues such as the community member who said *"I always felt out of place and disconnected from staff. If you promote First Nations it would be easier for First Nations to learn. I wanted to go hunting but no one felt hunting was important."* Another said: *"I would like to see an introductory course on traditional ways. It's not religion; it's a way of life. It would be nice to have a sweat lodge on the grounds of a new school."*

6. Scenario 2 – Technical Vocational

People liked both the academic (n=4) and the vocational (n=3) aspects of Scenario 2. Two people disliked the fact that it did not mention a First Nations focus. The "questions" tended to be comments that reiterated the need for skilled trades. One person wanted to know how bussing would work.

> *"We need to plan for the next 20 years because that's where our kids are at. Mix the seasons with technology and science . . . use birds not clocks."*
>
> - Community Resident at the Public Consultation

Final comments addressed the training needs of the Yukon including the need for *"professional training, such as dental assistant or in environmental health,"* as well as skills necessary for working in First Nations governments. One person suggested that Wood Street be a "school within a school" in this scenario, while another suggested that French Immersion be incorporated into existing schools rather than as a separate entity.

7. Scenario 3 – Individualized

Individualization and independence, (with positive references to the Independent Learning Centre), was the aspect most often valued about Scenario 3 (n=5). In addition, two people each liked the virtual learning aspect, the project-based concept, and the idea of year round schooling (e.g., *"I like the idea of three semesters with the summer offering opportunities for experiential science, or earth sciences and geography.")* However, this scenario engendered the most questions: *"how does individualized programming work in a group setting?"; "how will you raise awareness of all post-secondary opportunities?"; "how will community service work?"; "what about the arts?"* Two people simply commented that it seemed difficult to implement, while two others thought individualized learning should start earlier.

> *"You have to integrate to excite kids about their own learning – how they can fulfill their passion. Give them something they like, identify their strengths, and expose them to lots of different experiences!"*
>
> - Community Resident at the Public Consultation

Conversely, two people did not like the idea of year round schooling, while another feared this would mean an increase in staff. Two others did not see the benefit/not workable. A variety of final comments included everything from the importance of recognizing adolescent sleep patterns, to the need for teacher professional development on learning styles, to the need for more career counselors, and the importance of flexibility.

8. In Summary

People who attended the consultations appreciated the opportunity to comment on the specifics, but at the same time, have their more general opinions on education be acknowledged. While all scenarios had their supporters and skeptics, many people liked certain aspects of the different options. Overall, people were open to innovative ideas and changes to the status quo. As one person noted:

> *All scenarios have bits that are good, but as long as the school is physically safe, it's the programming that's the key. And I like this process because there is detail. The other study was good, but it didn't tell us anything we didn't already know. This is where we need to go.*

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